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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CULTURAL POLITICS IN THE 1930s:

PARTISAN REVIEW, THE SURREALISTS AND LEON TROTSKY

by

Marlene Kadar

(C)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Cultural Politics in the 1930s: Partisan Review, the Surrealists and Leon Trotsky," submitted by Marlene Kadar in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature.

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May 16th, 1983

To Marcela

ABSTRACT

The social allegiance, attitude, and ideology of a writer can be studied not only in his writings but also, frequently, in biographical extra-literary documents. The writer has been a citizen, has pronounced on questions of social and political importance, has taken part in the issues of his time.

Austin Warren and Rene Wellek,
Theory of Literature, p. 97.

The purpose of this dissertation is twofold: (1) to document the political and ideological changes that permanently affected the ideas and practice of the Surrealists and Partisan Review during the period 1926 to 1940 when committed Marxists, such as they were, faced the troublesome era of the Great Depression, worsened by the rise of Fascism in the West and Stalinism in the Soviet Union. In order to minimize their conflict without betraying their "causes," including a commitment to artistic freedom, they developed a system of relationships with the exiled Bolshevik, Leon Trotsky, and with each other; and (2) to explore the question of whether the Surrealists and Partisan Review, through their relationships with Leon Trotsky, proposed changes in Marxist aesthetic attitudes which amount to an opening towards a new Marxist Aesthetic.

A survey of the writings and publications of members of the Surrealist movement and of Partisan Review's editors and contributors during the crucial period of change (1926-1940) indicates the impact that Trotsky's ideas had on them during the last decade of his life in exile. Only Trotsky would tolerate, as Irving Howe has said, Marxism in politics, and modernism (or avant-gardism) in art. Trotsky's role in this brief moment of literary history is twofold: through his published and unpublished correspondence he engineered a triangle of intellectual coteries (Aaron), "truants" (William Barrett), "literary Trotskyists" (Lukacs), or, "anti-Stalinist radical intellectuals" (Alan Wald). This triangle transmitted information and ideas as they developed in Coyoacan, Mexico (where Trotsky,

Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo lived) through to New York (where Partisan Review was produced) and to Paris (the home of André Breton and his followers). The Paris-New York arm of the triangle was least travelled.

Whether or not Trotsky consciously engineered this system of relationships does not really matter. The point is that this man, the leader of a political revolution, a past Commissar of War, a prolific writer in exile, made time for the "revolution" that his correspondents imagined they would build. T.S. Eliot reasoned that Trotsky did care about the future of arts and letters: "there is no ... obvious reason why a man like Trotsky would take the trouble to pronounce upon the literature of revolution and the literature of the future" (The Criterion, January, 1933). He says Trotsky is "certainly a man of first-rate intelligence,...and he utters a good deal of sound sense." A month earlier, in an editorial defence of Scrutiny, F.R. Leavis debates some of the ideas in Literature and Revolution, obviously moved by their moral implications. Trotsky, he says, is "a dangerously intelligent Marxist" (December 1932). His influence in the thirties is indisputable.

The dissertation concludes that participants in the surrealist movement and Partisan Review revised their earlier pro-Communist Party political principles, and orthodox Communist aesthetics, in order to include notions of experiment and freedom in their work. Their revisions of both political and aesthetic ideas took place after 1926 (for the Surrealists) and 1932 (for Partisan Review), and developed alongside communications and correspondence with the then exiled Trotsky. Though the artists and critics about whom we speak broke from the Communist Party and rejected prescriptive Soviet cultural norms, they remained committed to Socialism, and to the liberation of humankind through modern art and culture, through the avant-garde. This commitment was fostered by the application of Trotsky's political theory of permanent revolution to questions of art and culture, an alternative, yet cohesive programme for Marxist intellectuals who, in the Dirty

Thirties, were dissatisfied with Stalin's theory of socialism in one country, and with Soviet cultural theories (proletarian culture and, later, socialist realism). An examination of the alternative of permanent revolution reveals similarities between it and later neo-Marxist critical theory, as embodied in Herbert Marcuse or Theodor Adorno. Appendix A is a sample collection of copies of the largely unpublished letters to and from Trotsky between 1935 and 1940, and Appendix B lists the participants in the dissident American group, The League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism.

PREFACE

On 21 December 1937, Leon Trotsky wrote a letter to a member of the American section of the Trotskyist political organization, the Fourth International. This was three years before Trotsky was assassinated in Mexico by agents of Joseph Stalin, and five years after he had been deprived of his Soviet citizenship. The letter represents the first published evidence that Trotsky wanted to arrange for the sale of his "archives" in the United States, in "an American scientific Institute."¹

At the time of writing Trotsky stipulates that the sale should be made with "some conditions," the major one being that "certain documents should be guarded with all the necessary guarantees especially against the Stalinists and their agents and so on."² He adds that

it would be absolutely unreasonable to preserve these documents here in our home. To place them in a safe place would signify permanent expense. It is from every point of view preferable to sell them immediately under the above indicated conditions.³

The documents were finally sold to Harvard University in 1940, although both the Hoover Institute and Chicago were also approached. And, consistent with Trotsky's request, the "letters in exile" were closed to the public for a period of forty years. These letters represent approximately one third of the entire collection which is housed at Harvard's Houghton Library; that is, about 17,500 letters.⁴ They include letters written to and from Trotsky in at least four languages - French, Russian, German and English. Jean van Heijenoort, now Professor Emeritus at Brandeis University, served as Houghton's principal consultant as the "Closed Section" of the archives were being prepared for public and scholarly use. I was personally encouraged by Professor van Heijenoort's

attitude toward the papers, and toward the writers of the letters - Trotsky and his correspondents. Soon after the archives were opened--on 2 January 1980--van Heijenoort was interviewed by the news media. The New York Times, 8 January 1980, writes that van Heijenoort

stressed that the main interest of the letters would probably be to provide not so much historical and political revelation as to a thorough understanding of Trotsky's extraordinary personality and the texture of his ideas.⁵

Having had a clue as to the non-political contents of the archives from Trotsky's biographer, Isaac Deutscher,⁶ and from the occasional published letter in other sources (a letter to André Breton published in Partisan Review, 6, in Winter 1939, pp. 126-7, and another in Bief, 12, 15 April 1960), I went to Harvard's Houghton Library on 2 January 1980 in order to study the unpublished and published "cultural correspondence," most of which was contained in the "Closed Section." I learned that a significant number of letters were exchanged between Trotsky, or his representatives, and writers and artists around the world. The most significant letters have been reproduced and are included in Appendix A of this thesis. Others may have been excerpted within the body of the text. The contents are catalogued and carefully numbered under the manuscript box number MS Rus 13.1. The catalogue to the archives includes the following introduction, explaining how the letters came to be at Houghton Library:

The papers of Lev Trotskii were purchased by Harvard College Library in 1940 and 1946 with funds provided by John Wood Blodgett, Jr. The preliminary arrangements for the sale and shipment of these archives were made by Trotskii himself; after his death, these were completed by his widow, Natalia Sedova Trotskii.

The first shipment of papers contained all that survived for the years 1917 to 1937, with the exception of certain official papers retained by the Soviet Union at the time of Trotskii's deportation and of miscellaneous papers in his son's possession that were either lost, stolen, or impounded during the exile period. The second shipment, purchased from Mrs. Trotskii in 1946, contained the papers for the years 1937 through 1940.

For administrative purposes the archives were divided into two parts: The pre-exile papers (1917 - 1928) and papers from the exile years (1929 - 1940). A stipulation was made by both Lev Trotskii and Mrs. Trotskii that the exile papers were not to be opened to the public until 1980.

The entire collection of the "Lev Trotskii" papers are divided in the following way:

T1: The Papers of Lev Trotskii

(bMS Russian 13)

D: The Dewey Commission Exhibits

(bound with T1)

V: The Jean van Heijenoort Papers

(bound with T1)

T2: The Exile papers of Lev Trotskii

(bMS Russian 13.1)

Although Trotsky's name is written "Lev Trotskii" in the catalogues, I have used the more popular English version of the name throughout the thesis: "Leon Trotsky." And although I have read papers from all four sections of the archives, I have concentrated on T2 where the majority of the "cultural correspondence" from the thirties are held. These letters are extra-literary documents which have contributed to a thesis which reveals the links between Trotsky and American and European Marxist intellectuals and artists who became disenchanted with Soviet Communism and its theories of culture. The "cultural radicals" then created their own literary avant-garde, and revised Marxist aesthetics to include notions of experiment and freedom. For them the word "revolution" had other than a strictly political meaning. It had serious implications for the committed writer who saw his commitment fulfilled in direct relation to his contribution to preserving - to quote Philip Rahv, 1952 - "the integrity of art and the intellect amidst the

conditions of alienation brought on by the major social forces of the modern era."⁷ The Trotsky Papers have been central to my contention that among the correspondents there emerged the roots of a "new Marxist aesthetic."

This "new Marxist aesthetic" did not develop with the consistency and rigour of a scientific project. It developed out of the real experience--the Realpolitik--of a community of intellectuals and artists whose quest for truth was threatened by both political and aesthetic concerns. Their vision of the communist future was shattered by the realities of Stalinism and the rise to power of Hitler, but their commitment to a better world continued. They found solace and allies in each other. The common link among them was Leon Trotsky who, among revolutionary leaders, was the only one to have explored questions of art and culture during the crisis in the Communist Party in the Soviet Union in the twenties. Trotsky, to the surprise of many--including T.S. Eliot--wrote Literature and Revolution in 1923 and 1924 when political debate was raging in the Party. Eliot muses that men of letters often take on "literary professions" in order to "revive sinking fires and rehabilitate" their professions. But,

there is no such obvious reason why a man like Trotsky should take the trouble to pronounce upon the literature of revolution and the literature of the future; the only reason that occurs to me in reading his book is that he may have been exasperated by the futilities of previous Russian writers upon the subject.⁸

Trotsky was exasperated in the twenties, and his correspondents felt the same way in the thirties. Their exasperation linked them to a common cause. This thesis will document that cause and the network of relationships which developed because of it. It will also demonstrate the political and aesthetic ideas which emerged during the process of letter-writing and debate that took place among the Surrealists in Paris and the editors and writers associated with Partisan Review in New York. An analysis of their relationships and ideas will demonstrate the extent to which the initial steps were taken in the publicizing and formulation of a new Marxist aesthetic.

In his recent book, A Margin of Hope (1982), Irving Howe asks the question: "How strong had Stalinism really been in the American intellectual world during the thirties?" He continues:

Was it, as becalmed liberals like to say, a mere marginal eruption confined to a few big cities—the very cities, as it happened, in which our cultural life was concentrated? Or was it true that communist cadres had often taken control of major cultural institutions?⁹

Howe concludes that there "are no reliable statistics" with which to answer the questions, and, moreover, "the quantitative approach is mostly beside the point."¹⁰ Howe does say that "to ask the question is to answer it: at least until the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939, cultural Stalinism had become a significant power in the United States, not unchecked or unchallenged, but exerting far greater influence than its numbers might suggest."¹¹ If cultural Stalinism represented a real force, then we must credit the left opposition with the challenges and checks against it, remembering that the opposition was often underground. The courage it took to write to Leon Trotsky in order to formulate or expand a challenge to the Stalinists, or to the far right, must never be forgotten. Trotsky corresponded with at least 43 intellectuals in America and France, although the correspondence was usually initiated by the intellectuals. These intellectuals include artists, actors, poets, critics, editors and publishers; they include people as diverse as André Breton and Carle Birney, and as close to each other as James T. Farrell and Philip Rahv.

Although scholars have begun to explore the decade of the thirties in America, full-length studies of the rise of "cultural radicalism" as an international challenge to "cultural Stalinism," at the centre of which stood the exiled Leon Trotsky and his ideas, do not exist. The scholarship on the American avant-garde, however, has been instrumental in establishing the political and aesthetic norms which operated during the critical years of the thirties. This scholarship includes primarily James Burkhart Gilbert's Writers and Partisans (1968);¹² Alan M. Wald's

James T. Farrell: The Revolutionary Socialist Years (1978);¹³ William Barrett's The Truants: Adventures Among the Intellectuals (1982);¹⁴ and, Irving Howe's A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography (1982).¹⁵ David Caute's 1973 study of The Fellow-Travellers: A Postscript to the Enlightenment is the only book which attempts to be international in its scope, but it does not credit Trotsky with any influence over intellectual relationships, or their political consequences in the thirties.¹⁶ The only book which presents the exiled Trotsky from a personal point of view, and includes comments on his relationships with European artists, is Jean van Heijenoort's With Trotsky in Exile (1978).¹⁷ I am indebted to this book and to Professor van Heijenoort in general for information regarding various relationships, likes and dislikes in Trotsky's little-known personal life. Alongside van Heijenoort's book we must place Irving Howe's sympathetic study of Trotsky in the Fontana Modern Masters series (1978), because it was the first book of its kind to discuss Trotsky as a man with other than political interests.¹⁸

This thesis presents new information about the relationships and their consequences by seeing the opposing left community as a community which, during a short period of time, reacted and responded at great personal risk according to a set of organic political and aesthetic principles that match Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. These principles, however, did not produce identical aesthetic results: though Partisan Review and the Surrealists collaborated around Trotsky's brain-child, the Fédération Internationale des Artistes Révolutionnaires et Indépendantes, they could never agree on aesthetic form. Breton, for example, had only contempt for the modern mimetic novel, but the novel dominated American writing in the thirties.

It must be mentioned here that this thesis concentrates on a single decade, the thirties, because it is during this decade that obvious links are established in

the cultural correspondence between the Surrealists, Partisan Review, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo in Mexico, and Leon Trotsky. It is also during this decade that splits and debates occur within the same movements, one side going with Trotsky, one side going with Stalin or, in America, with more liberal tendencies. Although the split-offs are historically significant, this thesis focuses only on the pro-Trotsky groups and individuals. That being done, the thesis posits a triangle of cultural correspondence which becomes—at different times in different countries—dominated by the selfsame ideology. The ideology manifest in the theory of permanent revolution solidifies political, social and cultural links, and as a social force, provides the left-wing alternative to cultural Stalinism. We must remember that developments in Partisan Review lagged behind those of the surrealists. The blanket use of the term "the thirties" is not always accurate for all groups. Breton, for example, first acted on his inspiration for Trotsky in 1925, when he read Trotsky's biography of Lenin. Partisan Review, however, began to reassess their Stalinist editorial policy in 1934, but did not come in contact with Trotsky until 1937, when their editorial statement declared them dissident Marxists at war with the Stalinists.

Notes

¹Writings of Leon Trotsky: Supplement II (1934 - 40) , ed., George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder, 1979), pp. 749 - 50.

² p. 750

³ibid.

⁴Martin Pave, "Trotsky Letters are Unveiled," The Boston Globe, 3 January 1980, p.2.

⁵Richard Eder, "Trotsky's Letters Draw Wide Interest," The New York Times, 8 January 1980, p. A14.

⁶The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky: 1929 - 1940 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.30 and pp. 431 - 5. These references are also mentioned in Michael Sheringham, André Breton: A Bibliography (London: Grant and Cutter, 1972), p.86 and p. 110.

⁷Philip Rahv, Literature and the Sixth Sense (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p.182.

⁸The Criterion (January 1933), p. 245.

⁹(New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), p. 128.

¹⁰ibid.

¹¹p. 129.

¹²(New York: John Wiley, 1968).

¹³(New York: New York University Press, 1978).

¹⁴(Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1982).

¹⁵(New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982).

¹⁶(New York: Macmillan, 1973).

¹⁷(Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978).

¹⁸(Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1978).

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INTRODUCTION

On 25 March 1935, Leon Trotsky wrote in his diary, after realizing that he was keeping "a political and literary diary rather than a personal one," that "politics and literature constitute in essence the content of my personal life."¹ Though known in the main as one of the engineers of the Russian Revolution, and later People's Commissar of War (1918-1925), he is remembered as Joseph Stalin's enemy and scapegoat, murdered by Stalin's agents in Mexico on August 20, 1940. He is not usually remembered as a literary man, or a man who, as early as 1923, produced a book-length theoretical study of the relationship of literature to revolution. Literature and Revolution was, however, worthy of the early attention of men of letters as reputed in literary criticism as F.R. Leavis and T.S. Eliot.² Both men, while disputing the general philosophy of Marxism, respected Trotsky's book for its intelligence, rigour and style.

Trotsky's Literature and Revolution³ represents his earliest contribution to cultural theory and literary criticism. Although Trotsky never entirely forgets his commitment to politics, his commitment to art and culture as essentially non-political entities is always present. Notwithstanding the primacy of the economic life of the "proletarian régime," he maintains that "the development of art is the highest test of the vitality and significance of each epoch."⁴ In this sense he sees the art and culture of the régime as the signpost of its success as a truly socialist state. As such the new culture cannot be forced or prescribed. This is made particularly clear in his most controversial chapter, "Proletarian Culture and Proletarian Art," wherein he declares that "there is no proletarian culture" and "there never will be any and in fact there is no reason to regret this."⁵

Trotsky's reasoning is not complex: the dictatorship of the proletariat is temporary; the proletariat needs most of its time after the revolution (perhaps, decades) to conquer power in order to ensure that more urgent needs are met; when there is time for "cultural reconstruction," the proletariat will have "dissolved into a Socialist community" and will free itself from its class characteristics; and, thus, the proletariat will cease to be a proletariat.⁶ Trotsky declares that in its essence, "the dictatorship of the proletariat is not an organization for the production of the culture of a new society, but a revolutionary and military system struggling for it."⁷ Thus it is a misnomer to use the word "proletarian" to describe a culture, and, moreover, the ideal culture is classless. The proletariat is a class which, however hard it might struggle to win power, does not aim to keep it. The term "proletarian culture" irritates Trotsky, then, for a number of reasons. He goes so far as to say:

"proletarian culture," "proletarian art," etc., in three cases out of ten is used uncritically to designate the culture and the art of the coming Communist society, in two cases out of ten to designate the fact that special groups of the proletariat are acquiring separate elements of pre-proletarian culture, and finally, in five cases out of ten, it represents a jumble of concepts and words out of which one can make neither head nor tail.

Trotsky's position on proletarian culture led him to participate in discussions revolving around Communist Party cultural policy. In 1924, for example, he addressed a meeting of the Press Department of the Central Committee on the subject. His speech is published in a collection of speeches and articles entitled Leon Trotsky On Literature and Art.⁹ "Class and Art" is aimed at those Soviet writers' groups who want to claim proletarian culture for themselves (i.e. Proletkult), and who want to make one particular group the official cultural arm of the party. Trotsky abhors the idea that such groups will become "factories of proletarian literature," and produce low-quality art.¹⁰

At least two features set Trotsky's Literature and Revolution apart from the more orthodox Marxist literary theory. First, in his essay on "The Formalist School of Poetry and Marxism," Trotsky makes it clear that he does not view art as simply a weapon in the class struggle. He says:

It is very true that one cannot always go by the principles of Marxism in deciding whether to reject or to accept a work of art. A work of art should, in the first place, be judged by its own law, that is, by the law of art.¹¹

In this sense, Trotsky is not dogmatic in his assessments of cultural change. As Irving Howe has said of him, Trotsky

understands that the tempo of cultural change, necessarily slow and at least partly determined by the inner life of culture itself, cannot be yoked to the tempo of political revolution.¹²

Politics and literature, of course, have an interdependent relationship, but this does not mean that the latter serves the former. Orthodox Marxist literary critics, and especially Communist Party members, are much less flexible.

Second, Trotsky shows an appreciation for psychoanalysis as a valid method of interpreting certain psychological phenomena. In his essay on "Pre-Revolutionary Art," he refers to the teachings of the Austrian psychoanalysts in order to discredit the Russian essayist and critic, Vasily Vasilyevich Rozanov. Trotsky is unrelenting in his criticism. He writes

When the "genius" of Rozanov is spoken of, it is chiefly his revelations in the field of sex that are emphasized. But if some one of his admirers would try to bring together and to systematize what Rozanov said in his peculiar language, adapted to omissions and ambiguities, about the influence of sex on poetry, on religion, on government, he would get something very meager and very little that is new.¹³

Trotsky then continues with his unusual view that psychoanalysis is not as valueless as the Soviet Marxists would have us believe. He says that

the Austrian psycho-analytic school (Freud, Jung, Albert Adler and others) made an immeasurably greater contribution to the question of the role of the sex-element in the forming of individual character and of social consciousness. In fact, there can be no comparison here. Even

4

the most paradoxical exaggerations of Freud are much more significant and fertile than the broad surmises of Rozanov who constantly falls into intentional half-wittedness, or simply babble, repeats himself, and lies for two.¹⁴

Later in his essay on "Futurism" Trotsky talks more generally about the function of art, and declares the significance of psychology and the "inner life" in literature. He does not wholly agree, he says, with his comrades that art is a "hammer"; he insists that art is both "hammer" and "mirror." He asks, "if one cannot get along without a mirror, even in shaving oneself, how can one reconstruct oneself or one's life, without seeing oneself in the "mirror" of literature?"¹⁵ He adds

What does it mean to "deny experiences," that is, deny individual psychology in literature and on the stage? This is a late and long outlived protest of the Left wing of the intelligentsia against the passive realism of the Chekhov school and against dreamy symbolism. If the experiences of Uncle Vanya have lost a little of their freshness—and this sin has actually taken place—it is none the less true that Uncle Vanya is not the only one with an inner life. In what way, on what grounds, and in the name of what, can art turn its back to the inner life of present-day man who is building a new external world, and thereby rebuilding himself?¹⁶

Over and above Trotsky's acceptance of the compatibility of psychology and Marxism, and his respect for the inner laws of art, Trotsky also diverged from the orthodox Soviet *littérateurs* when he defended avant-garde elements in Russian literature. Both in Literature and Revolution, and in various essays in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art and in the last two volumes of his untranslated Collected Writings,¹⁷ Trotsky reiterates that many new artistic movements and styles will develop in the post-revolutionary period.¹⁸ These movements and styles are, moreover, connected to a larger tradition, which cannot be cut off.¹⁹ The artist must be in tune with his epoch, however contradictory his experience may be.²⁰ It is Trotsky's view that the Russian fellow-travellers—the Serapion Fraternity, Sergey Yessenin and the Imagists, Boris Pilnyak, Yevgeny Zamyatin and the "Peasant-Singing Poets," the Futurists and the Constructivists—can be criticized, but they cannot be forced into silence by fiat, law or prison.²¹

Although Trotsky seemed to enjoy theorizing about larger cultural problems, he also wrote literary criticism, the bulk of which appears in English in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art.²² The earliest essay in this collection first appeared in Neue Zeit in German in 1908, and is a celebration of Tolstoy, "Poet and Rebel." The most sensitive essay was written in memory of Sergey Yessenin in 1925, and reveres Yessenin's lyricism and his authenticity. He also wrote an essay on the occasion of Vladimir Mayakovsky's suicide in 1930, hailing both him and Yessenin victims of the Soviet cultural bureaucracy, and artists who could not become progenitors of proletarian literature.²³

With the same passion and commitment, Trotsky approached artists and socialists in the West during his exile period. Regretting the fate of his own Russian culture, he kept trying to prevent either censorship or liberalism among his comrades and his disciples. In the thirties he directed his attention toward the Surrealists and Partisan Review, inspired by his never-ending zeal and hope that some day Marxism and art would intersect to the advantage of both.

Notes

¹Trotsky's Diary in Exile: 1935, trans. by Elena Zarudnaya, foreword by Jean van Heijenoort (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), p. 43.

²See Leavis, "Under Which King, Bezonian?," Scrutiny (Dec. 1932): 205-14, and T.S. Eliot, "A Commentary," The Criterion (Jan. 1933): 244-49.

³The authoritative English translation of this book is published in the series of Ann Arbor Paperbacks for the study of communism and Marxism (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960 and 1975). It was translated by Rose Strunsky, and dedicated to Christian Rakovsky. It was originally published in Moscow in 1924.

⁴p. 9.

⁵pp. 185-6.

⁶pp. 184-6.

⁷p. 190.

⁸p. 193.

⁹Ed. and Intro. by Paul N. Siegel (New York: Pathfinder, 1970).

¹⁰pp. 78-9.

¹¹p. 178.

¹²Irving Howe, Trotsky, Fontana Modern Masters (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1978), p. 87.

¹³Literature and Revolution, p. 42.

¹⁴pp. 42-3.

¹⁵p. 137.

¹⁶pp. 137-8.

¹⁷The Collected Writings [Sočineniya] were published in Moscow in 1926, and have been preserved by Columbia University Press on microfilm. Volume XX includes essays on nineteenth century Russian literature, on Tolstoy, Gogol, Ouspensky and Dobrolubov, and also on writers in the West (including Ibsen and Hauptmann). The last section, written between 1908 and 1914, is entitled "The West and Us," and probes relations between Russian and European intellectuals. Volume XXI is devoted to popular culture, the media and controversial Russian novels, such as Zamyatin's We.

¹⁸Literature and Revolution, pp. 13-14; "Culture and Socialism in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art, pp. 88-91; and, "Art and Revolution," Partisan Review (August 1938).

¹⁹Literature and Revolution, p. 179.

²⁰p. 12.

²¹The essay, "The Literary 'Fellow-Travellers' of the Revolution," addresses this problem. See Literature and Revolution, pp. 56-115. Irving Howe says that this idea that art cannot be called into existence by fiat, and also that there is a relation between cultural upsurge and political decadence, is "crucial to the serious study of modernism though not, unfortunately, elaborated by Trotsky" (p. 88).

²²Part II, pp. 127-234.

²³p. 178.

An examination of the special role and changing status of the intelligentsia is, therefore, essential to any social examination of modern literature.

Philip Rahv, Essays on Literature and Politics:
1932 - 1972, 1978

One can make vast speculation about Trotsky. He is the sort of man who, if he is given full power in a great plan of this kind (the Labour Army), will work miracles, but if he is hampered by petty labor disputes and a thousand petty jealousies, will fail utterly. I always believed that if he had been interested in finance instead of social revolution he would now be our greatest banker. If he had been interested in the war from the Allied standpoint he would have been a great military hero.

Louise Bryant, Mirrors of Moscow, 1923.

I'm always thinking of Russia
I can't keep her out of my head,
I don't give a damn for Uncle Sham,
I am a left-wing radical Red.

H.H. Lewis, Thinking of Russia, 1932.

CHAPTER ONE

THE THIRTIES: MAKING WAY

In his book Starting Out in the Thirties Alfred Kazin talks about a "rare experience of connectedness in the literary world" of the "lean and angry Thirties." He claims that the decade was unique in American letters because of the "new" intellectuals who led it: "the Thirties in literature were the age of the plebes--of writers from the working class, the lower class, the immigrant class, the non-literate class, from western farms and mills--those whose struggle was to survive." The Twenties, by contrast, reminded one of "rebels from 'good' families--Dos Passos, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Cummings, Wilson, Cowley."¹ The Thirties, Kazin proudly boasts, constituted a "revolutionary yet wholly literary tradition in American writing," an "intellectual Socialist" tradition to which he belonged alongside writers as renowned as James T. Farrell, Philip Rahv, Dwight Macdonald, V.F. Calverton, and John Wheelwright.

Besides class and ethnic background, these writers shared a certain Marxist world view, which was endemic to the period, and the place. If they had at one time belonged to the Communist Party, they no longer did by 1936, the year in which the trumped-up Moscow Trials began (there were four waves of trials between 1936 and 1938).

Their overall concept of the Soviet Union, the country in which the revolution of 1917 had been "successful," was challenged, and their commitment to socialism became a difficult question, both philosophically and practically speaking. As far

as cultural questions were concerned, these writers tended to be the ones who developed notions about the role of art in industrial societies, and the idea of a "progressive art," in the 1920s. As Alan Wald has explained in his study of James T. Farrell, the intellectual origins of "the outstanding Trotskyist and left-wing anti-Stalinist writers of the 1930s began with the independent assimilation of certain social and cultural notions in the 1920s." These notions grew out of an intelligent respect for the autonomy of art, even in the capitalist world. They

often were derived from an understanding of contemporary materialist philosophy and social theory and respect for the functions of imaginative literature beyond immediately apparent usages and meanings. As an incipient group, these energetic intellectuals had often achieved unusual breadth, depth and self-sufficiency prior to the Depression, and hence they were better prepared to assess Communist party policy from a critical stance.²

Philip Rahv, Farrell himself, Dwight Macdonald, other editors of Partisan Review,³ painters and poets who wrote for this magazine, and various other "energetic" New York intellectuals were part of this "incipient group," or intelligentsia. As with other groups of intellectuals who are defined as intelligentsias, they were bound together by the fact that they were conscious of being part of a community. They had a "sense," according to Raymond Williams,⁴ of being "a distinct and self-conscious group" despite the fact that the group included different kinds of artists and intellectuals. The New York intelligentsia came to include the editors of Partisan Review, the poets who were published in it and other smaller magazines, and the artists, like Diego Rivera, who were friendly to it and thus were part of its periphery. As further discussion will reveal, the links between the New York circle and the European Surrealists, both part of a broader intelligentsia with international ties and internationalist politics, were forged in part by the critical and central position of Leon Trotsky and his political aspiration to stimulate an "alternative" revolutionary political movement the world over.

As the decade progressed, and world political relations became ever more strained, this intelligentsia found itself less committed to the Soviet version of socialism, and more committed to liberate "Marxist socialism from the Stalinists."⁵

Wald describes the momentum of the Thirties aptly:

The Moscow Trials unfolded at the same time as the Spanish Civil War, the sweep of the Popular Front in France, and the growing fear of fascism against which the Soviet Union seemed a bulwark. In the course of the four trials between 1936 and 1938, Leon Trotsky and other Old Guard Bolsheviks were charged with plotting to assassinate Stalin and other Soviet leaders; conspiring to wreck the Soviet Union's economic and military power; working from the inception of the Revolution for espionage services of Britain, France, Japan and Germany; and making secret agreements with Hitler and the Mikado to cede vast slices of Soviet territory to imperialist Germany and Japan. The Moscow Trials, as James Farrell marked down in his diary in early 1937, drew a "line of blood" across the decade and the intellectual left.⁶

Desperate for political clarity and unity, and at the same time fervent believers in the American literary tradition, these men -- and the few women among them, including Mary McCarthy and Jack London's daughter, Joan -- awkwardly battled on both the political and cultural fronts. They established and joined committees of one sort or another -- the Non-Partisan Labor Defense Committee (1934-36), the Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky (1936) (to which belonged Sidney Hook and whose petition was signed by John Dewey and Joseph Wood Krutch, among others), the John Dewey Commission of Inquiry into the Charges Against Leon Trotsky, the FIARI (Fédération Internationale de l'art révolutionnaire et indépendante), and other kinds of writers' unions and circles.

The group was isolated from both the orthodox far left, and the right, precisely at a time when the two poles seemed to become friendly toward each other. Kazin talks about how many of the New York left resisted the temptation to support the Popular Front (often called United Front), even when the editors of

Colliers and many a New York publishing house welcomed Stalin "as the only responsible leader of the time."⁷ The intellectual and political alienation which these "premature anti-Stalinists," as Kazin calls them, experienced in the Thirties motivated them, inspired them, and bound them together. If they were going to be prohibited from publishing in the pages of Nation, New Republic, and even, Life magazine, then they would have to strengthen the editorial board of Partisan Review, and support experimental projects in the booming "little magazine" industry of that era, Kenneth Patchen's Pulse being a good example of the American little magazine.⁸ As James Burkhart Gilbert says in his pioneering Writers and Partisans, the industry was important enough to be the focus of his study, "a history of assumptions about literature and the role of the intellectual seen through an important institution, the little magazine."⁹

Rahv, Macdonald, Farrell and others had begun to make a name for themselves in New York City as early as 1926, the year that Leon Trotsky formed the Joint Opposition with Zinoviev and Kamenev against Stalin -- only two years after Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin had formed a ruling triumvirate against Trotsky. In the same year the vituperative Mike Gold started up the New Masses, backed by the Communist Party (CPUSA), and hostile to the veteran, intelligent Modern Quarterly,¹⁰ edited by the literary critic V.F. Calverton. The younger, "college-bred intelligentsia of the Depression," as John P. Diggins¹¹ called them, looked somewhat askance at both publications and trends in radical intellectual thought, and only militated on the fringes of both groups, not yet organized into a stable pool of cultural influence of their own. The great stockmarket crash of 1929 wrote Edmund Wilson, then editor for The New Republic, was "for us almost like a reveling of the earth in preparation for the Day of Judgment."¹² It strengthened the idea, current among the leading minds in PR, that "avant-garde literature and

radical politics, since they both challenged bourgeois society, were two aspects of a larger theme: a rebellious civilization dedicated to the destruction of the old."¹³ Parts of Farrell's Studs Lonigan¹⁴ began to appear in 1932, devoted to exactly this theme: Farrell painfully documents the spiritual and economic poverty of the working and lower middle classes, the bigotry of the Catholic church and its immoral power over "his" people, and the bane of the toiler's life in decaying Irish America. In Young Lonigan, the first novel in the Studs trilogy, Farrell describes a "July night" which "leaked heat all over Fifty-eighth Street."

The dust, the scraps of paper, the piled-up store windows, the first electric lights sizzling into brightness. Sammie Schmaltz, the paper man, yelling his final box-score editions, a boy's broken hoop left forgotten against the elevated girder, the people hurrying out of the elevated station and others walking lazily about, all bespoke the life of a community, the tang and sorrow and joy of a people that lived, worked, suffered, procreated, aspired, filled out their little days, and died. And the flower of this community, its young men, were grouped about the pool room, choking the few squares of sidewalk outside it...¹⁵

Farrell's naturalism and his indictment of capitalist societies was acceptable to Partisan Review right from the start. A segment of Studs Lonigan appeared in the very first issue when PR supported the Soviet Union, and the popular Soviet view of art and culture. It would be two more years before the rupture between a novel like Studs Lonigan and a notion of "proletarian literature" would emerge; it would also be two more years before PR questioned the progress of Soviet society, and its increasing bureaucratization.

PR began in February/March 1934 as a bi-monthly "of Revolutionary Literature published by the John Reed Club of New York." It considered itself "new" in the field of cultural work, but it is clear that in many ways its editorial policy was not radically different from the policy established before its affiliation with the John Reed Club. It boasted in its first editorial that PR "is the organ of

the John Reed Club . . . , the oldest and largest Club in the country. . . . It will publish the best creative work of its members as well as of non-members who share the literary aims of the John Reed Club."

Who was John Reed, and what was the Club? What were its "literary aims"? According to Diggins, John Silas Reed was a "robust, pleasure-loving youth who would become an acquaintance of Lenin and Trotsky, an important American figure in the early Comintern, a patron saint of the American Communist Party, and a hero buried near the Kremlin wall along with the fallen heroes of 1917." He was "the poet-playboy of the Lyrical Left," which was a collection of optimistic radical intellectuals, who, according to Diggins, created all kinds of new institutions -- magazines, experimental schools, art colonies -- in and around Greenwich Village in the early years from 1911 to 1916. Anyone who "had a plan to remake the world was welcomed" into Mabel Dodge's "notorious apartment" to exchange opinions and "experience freedom."¹⁶ The Lyrical Left's significance rests with its fusing of politics and art in America, which PR was to inherit, and it is not surprising to find in this milieu an artist as charismatic as John Reed spending time in the Soviet Union during and after the revolution. The Club was named in his memory; he died of scurvy and malnutrition while in the U.S.S.R. in 1920 after writing his passionate account of the revolution, Ten Days that Shook the World.¹⁷

The impassioned and rebellious Lyrical Left, of which Reed was a leading member, helped determine the spirit of Partisan Review. The editorial statement of the first issue of the magazine reveals the magazine's politico-cultural aspirations, and its ongoing commitment to the Soviet Union. It begins: "PR appears at a time when American literature is undergoing profound changes." Full of optimism, it continues:

The economic and political crisis of capitalism, the growth of the revolutionary movement the world over, and the successful building of socialism in the Soviet Union have deeply affected American life, thought and art. They have had far-reaching effects not only upon the political activities of writers and artists, but upon their writing and thinking as well. For the past four years the movement to create a revolutionary art, which for a decade was confined to a small group, has spread throughout the United States. A number of revolutionary magazines has sprung up which publish revolutionary fiction, poetry and criticism.

PR seems very clear on its politics in this first issue:

We propose to concentrate on creative and critical literature, but we shall maintain a definite viewpoint -- that of the revolutionary working class. Through our specific literary medium we shall participate in the struggle of workers and sincere intellectuals against imperialist war, fascism, national and racial oppression, and for the abolition of the system which breeds these evils. The defense of the Soviet Union is one of our principal tasks.

Sympathies with Stalin and the Soviet Union were reaffirmed in the seventh issue of PR, April-May 1935, when it presented "a united creative front on the eve of the first Congress of American Writers" with the fourth number of Dynamo, edited by a lesser known leftist, Stephen Foster. The editorial statement is entitled, "Forward to the Great Alliance," and is full of jargon which Rahv --as we shall see later--was never to condone after 1936. The First Congress of American Writers, it says,

will accelerate the secession of American intellectuals from the apologetics and chaos which capitalism nurtures in culture, and will set the frame for a more profound and more extensive revolutionary literature. It will be a stirring political demonstration of the great battle-alliance of intellectuals and the exploited masses against fascism and war. . . . Foremost as a source of revolutionary tradition looms the Soviet Union, with its gigantic cultural and economic achievements in the sphere of socialist construction, its consistent struggle for world peace, and the hope it holds for the liberation of humanity. (pp. 3-4)

In this same issue ensues a discussion on "What is a Proletarian Novel?", wherein James T. Farrell criticizes a growing determinism among "revolutionary critics." He says that they wrongly "make the relationship between culture and economics

direct and immediate, and this is an inadequate assumption, and it is foreign to the thought of Marx, as I understand Marx's writings.[he refers to A Treatise on Political Economy] (pp. 13-14). Even Rahv and Wallace Phelps (the alias of William Phillips) criticize artists who "are guilty of an excessive rationalism," who "present reality geometrically, rather than as a living flux," in their essay on "Criticism" (pp. 16-25). It is interesting that in this issue appears a poem by Kenneth Patchen, at that time a poet whose work had been published in New Masses and The Magazine, and whose poems represented the passionate, liberated creative spirit in the radical American tradition. Patchen's work is most like that by some of his surrealist counterparts in Paris and other parts of Europe, such as Louis Aragon, for instance. "Poem" appeared in PR only three years before he wrote an excruciatingly sincere letter to Leon Trotsky asking editorial advice for the magazine Pulse, edited by himself and Harvey Breit. The sarcasm of this poem is typical of the Lyrical Left:

POEM

What does it matter: that groupings
Of men venture reason into the crying,
--good god, what does it matter--
That alleys rot with weeping; that men
Are ripe for dying; are learned in killing--
What does it matter. Let us
Gravely poison every pool where
Plato drank; upend the word,
'love' 'heart' 'love' 'heart'.
Let us dream with the heavy artillery
Stopping the lovely mouth
Of this generation; let us dream
While shells pour paradise
Into the bowels of these young men.

Let us say with Wordsworth; let us say
With Herrick, Isaac Watts and Hunt:
Say we were weary, say we were cheated,
Say we fell like sheep and bleated;
Say life went over, missing us--
But add, we died content
With Big Berthas kissing us.
(Partisan Review) (2 July - August 1935): 81

Despite PR's praise of the Soviet Union and its cultural policy, Patchen's poem is by no means "proletarian." It is an almost visionary poem reflecting the world view of the romantic intellectual who sees decay around him, and sees his comrades and his generation martyred on the battlefields. That PR would publish such a poem as early as 1935 is an indication of things to come in the final years of the decade. As Gilbert says, "from the beginning the Partisan was an intellectual center for a radical critique of the left literary movement."¹⁸

The editorial board of the first issue of PR included the three East European Jewish editors and poets, Joshua Kunitz and Edward Dahlberg (both listed with the John Reed Club Writers' School in 1929), and Philip Rahv. Rahv, however, was the only one to last into 1936 when PR combined with another small revolutionary magazine, Anvil, edited by Jack Conroy. Conroy, who also edited Rebel Poet from 1931 to 1932, and New Anvil from 1939 to 1940, had at this time maintained a running feud with the Communist Party (C.P.).—He thought that it had manipulated the early death of the first Anvil, and, so, disapproved of the merger with PR. Chielens quotes Conroy as having said that the merger provided the Party with space for "the dialectical gymnastics so dear to the hearts of the New York intelligentsia."¹⁹ In the editorial statement of the February 1936 issue, the editors -- including Conroy, William Phillips, Rahv, and as consultant, Richard Wright -- modestly said:

With this issue, PR and Anvil are combining to publish a new literary monthly. Though continuing the traditions of its predecessors, the new magazine will be broader in scope and, we believe, more mature. We invite contributions from the country over, and letters from readers on their reactions to our policy as well as specific stories, poems, and articles. (p. 2)

In this same issue one notices a few names and influences, some of which are European (Malraux's name is most prominent). The issue begins with a piece of

fiction called "The Grade Crossing" by John Dos Passos, a member of the Old Left, and a participant in the Sacco-Vanzetti movement (he wrote a number of poems and plays which expressed his shock at the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927). Waldo Frank's name appears in this issue, too, a name which will reemerge in the work of the more liberal anti-Stalinist intellectuals and "naive" artists -- to use his own expression from a letter (Rus.Ms 1234) to Trotsky. By virtue of their commitment to "the American literary tradition," these intellectuals ensured the new, non-proletarian directions PR would take. At that time Frank was chairman of the League of American Writers, a group whose sympathy for Stalin was just beginning to break.²⁰ Later, when he was invited in winter of 1937 to join the Commission to study the Moscow Trials and the accusations made against Trotsky, he vacillated in his decision. The Frank-Dewey correspondence reveals his hesitations.²¹

By 1936 it is clear that PR wants to include more and more European material in its pages. Alongside new names in American letters -- such as the communist author of Daughter of Earth, Agnes Smedley, and the author of The Executioner Waits, Josephine Herbst -- PR published the Soviet novelist, Ilya Ehrenbourg, the "famous literary exile from fascist Italy," Ignazio Silone, the vacillating surrealist-cum-party-man, Louis Aragon and the French writer and voyageur to both the Congo (in 1925) and the Soviet Union (in 1936), André Gide. (It must be remembered that it was at this time that Pierre Naville and André Breton were trying to win Gide over to the anti-Stalinist camp in Paris. It is clear from letter number (9356) from Trotsky to Naville, dated 28 January 1938, that the Trotskyist movement was assessing Gide and his position on the U.S.S.R.²²). Gide's books were often the subject of much of the correspondence, eliciting as they did quite a row among the communistes. Le Retour de l'U.R.S.S. and its sequel,

Retouches à mon retour de l'U.R.S.S., were very critical of the Soviet system, complaining of "dreadful uniformity, facile conformism, idolatry of Stalin, brutal indoctrination, ignorance of the outside world, repression exercised by the dictatorship of a few men, artistic bigotry, fear of originality, exploitation of the workers, etc."²³ At first the Party held Gide in esteem; later it viewed him as a decadent homosexual nobody. Ultimately he fell out of favour with Trotsky, too, as revealed by the Trotsky-Malaquais correspondence in Appendix A (2897).

Silone's novel, Fontamara, and his early disillusionment with orthodox communism, provided a good platform for the political and social ideas of many of the editors of Partisan Review. One cannot overlook the fact that Fontamara appeared in 1933— five years after Silone had broken with the Communist Party, and in the same year as Malraux's important La Condition humaine.²⁴ Though the authors developed different political points of view, both novels described facets of oppressed man's struggle for dignity in a world which seems to offer no choices; one is set in rural Italy (despite an important scene in Rome), the other, for the most part, in revolutionary Shanghai. After Malcolm Cowley -- literary editor of New Republic in 1934 -- reviewed both these books in the magazine, most socialist intellectuals referred to them as signposts of a new literary tradition, a sincere Tendenzliteratur. According to a much-quoted letter from Friedrich Engels to the English novelist Margaret Harkness (alias John Law), April 1888, Tendenz is a kind of "Realismus," which presents the world accurately, convincingly, but is not obvious about the author's political views. "Realismus bedeutet, meines Erachtens, ausser der Treue des Details die getreue Wiedergabe typischer Charaktere unter typischen Umständen."²⁵

Alfred Kazin says that Cowley, in his capacity as literary editor, changed "the literary side of the New Republic in the direction of a sophisticated literary

Stalinism, since for Cowley 'revolution' was not the new stage of development."²⁶ Fontamara and La Condition humaine were the "brilliant new revolutionary novels" which he tried to use to bolster his political ideas, ambiguous though these ideas were. In spite of Cowley, and probably because these two novels had achieved such authority in left circles, PR tried to direct some of its energies toward Europe, too, thereby alleviating the pressure of politics at home, and attracting Trotsky and his followers. The novels were so important on their own in the Thirties, however, that even Trotsky paid them both homage in short reviews. Fontamara, he says, is "remarkable," informed by "Marxist method," and a "truly artistic work." It is interesting to note that Trotsky does not call Fontamara a Marxist novel, nor a radical or proletarian novel. He implies only that it is "revolutionary," and insinuates that it simply must be published in the U.S.S.R. (we will see later that the Surrealists, too, use the same word to describe the art of which they approved). Naturally the publication of Fontamara in the U.S.S.R. would have been prevented by censors. Trotsky's comments are as follows:

A remarkable book. From the first line to the last it is directed against the fascist regime in Italy, against its lies, its violence, a book of passionate political propaganda. But revolutionary passion is raised here to such heights that it creates a truly artistic work. Fontamara is only a poor godforsaken village in the south of Italy. In the space of the book's two hundred pages, this name becomes a symbol of the whole Italian countryside, its poverty, its despair, but also its indignation.

Silone knows the Italian peasantry remarkably well; the first twenty years of the author's life, according to his own words, were spent in Fontamara. Embellishment and sentimentality are foreign to him. He knows how to see life as it is, to generalize what he sees by means of the Marxist method and then to embody its generalizations in artistic images. The story is told by the peasants, *cafoni*, paupers themselves. Despite the exceptional difficulties of this style, the author executes like a real master. Some chapters have a stupendous force.

Has this book appeared in the Soviet Union? Has it drawn the attention of the publishing houses of the comintern? The book deserves a circulation of millions of copies. But no matter what the attitude of the official bureaucracy may be towards works of truly revolutionary

literature, Fontamara - we are convinced - will make its way. To assist the circulation of this book is the duty of every revolutionist.²⁷

In 1936 James T. Farrell was contributing a regular column to PR, "Theatre Chronicle," and preparing for a long correspondence with Leon Trotsky, some of which concerns the role of art and literature in American culture. Reputable American poets, such as William Carlos Williams, Kenneth Rexroth and Archibald MacLeish published works in PR. These poets might be labelled "experimentalists" and "modernists," influenced by French symbolism and tending toward imagism, -- as in MacLeish's case -- and, occasionally, concerned with political issues (MacLeish's Panic and Fall of the City, 1937, are verse plays dealing with the themes of the Great Depression and Hitler's rise to power). Their quest is to expose modern man and what perplexes him, but for them modern man is in no way only proletarian or perplexed by life in the factory alone. Even in MacLeish's so-called proletarian phase, "his response to (the revolutionary movement) is genuinely poetic, and traditionally so."²⁹ (Take, for example, "Speech to those who say Comrade.") These are the words of Alan Calmer, one of the editors of PR in 1936.³⁰ Calmer quotes from Public Speech:

The brotherhood is not by the blood certainly:
But neither are men brothers by speech--by saying so:
Men are brothers by life lived and are hurt for it:

Who are the born brothers in truth? The puddlers
Scorched by the same flame in the same foundries:
Those who have spit on the same boards with the blood in it:

Those that have hidden and hunted and all such--
fought together: labored together: they carry the
Common look like a card and they pass touching.

Much more lyrical than MacLeish, and more optimistic than the Patchen poem quoted earlier, is Kenneth Rexroth's "Poem," which appeared in the June 1936 issue of PR. Though in tone it might remind us of some of Mayakovsky's early lyrics, it

is no eulogy to Lenin, nor to the working man. Like many surrealist poems, it celebrates the revolutionary spirit in general -- a spirit which the "real" communists would come to disapprove. It is full of that familiar anticipation of humanity's rising up:

remember now there were others before this
 now when the unwanted hours rise up
 and the sun rises red in unknown quarters
 and the constellations change places
 and cloudless thunder erases the furrows
 and moonlight stains and the stars grow hot
 though the air is foetid conscripted fathers
 with the black bloat of your dead faces
 though men wander idling out of factories
 where turbine and hand are both freezing
 and the air clears at last above the chimneys
 though mattresses curtain the windows
 and every hour hears the snarl of explosion
 yet one shall rise up alone saying
 "I am one out of many I have heard
 voices high in the air crying out commands
 seen men's bodies burst into torches
 seen faun and maiden die in the night air raids
 heard the watchwords exchanged in alleys
 felt hate speed the blood stream and fear curl the nerves
 I know too the last heavy maggot
 and know the trapped vertigo of impotence
 I have travelled prone and unwilling
 in the dense processions through the shaken streets
 shall we hang thus by taut navel strings
 to this corrupt placenta till we're flyblown
 till our skulls are cracked by crow and kite
 and our members become the business of ants
 our teeth the collection of magpies?"
 they shall rise up heroes there will be many
 none will prevail against them at last
 they go saying each "I am one of many"
 their hands empty save for history
 they die at bridges bridgegates and drawbridges
 remember there were others before
 the sepulchres are full at ford and bridgehead
 there will be children with flowers there
 and flower gardens and flower cities there
 and lambs and golden eyed lions there
 and people remembering in the future³¹

PR could not, however, maintain its level of optimism, nor its bank account, the consequence of which was that it did not publish again until December of 1937. At that time there were only three editors remaining: Alan Calmer, William Phillips, and Philip Rahv. Although Calmer eventually abandoned the endeavor the other two remained committed to the journal a year later. Not only did the editors feel that the Popular Front was "a betrayal of political and cultural radicalism," but, as James Gilbert says, "The Moscow Trials and the progress of the Spanish Civil War were indications to the editors of Partisan as well as to other American intellectuals that the Soviet Union had deeply compromised its leadership of the international working class." Thus,

While the communists were gathering liberal sympathizers on the basis of their cultural Popular Front, the editors of Partisan remained constant in their original desire to find a common ground between radical politics and avantgarde literature. Discouraged by the failure of the proletarian movement and the fading of their hopes for a revolutionary new culture, and struggling with financial difficulties, they suspended publication of the magazine for a year.³²

Then in December of 1937, a new issue of Partisan Review appeared, with a cover design by Theodore J. Roszak, essays by Edmund Wilson, Lionel Abel, and Dwight Macdonald (who at the time was reviewing humour in the New Yorker), fiction by Delmore Schwartz and James T. Farrell, a prose poem and etchings by Picasso, poems by Wallace Stevens and James Agee, "Theatre Chronicle" by Mary McCarthy, and book reviews by Philip Rahv, F.W. Dupee, Lionel Trilling, George L.K. Morris, Sidney Hook and Arthur Mizener. A new "department" called "Ripostes" is included in this issue, devoted to "brief editorial comment and to communications," a forum for the new intellectual and political battles to be fought as the magazine came closer and closer to a version of "Trotskyist" politics and "cultural politics" in the Thirties.

Because it was so controversial in its day, and because it marks the great change PR was to make in its attitude toward art and literature in the modern period, as well as in its political views, the 1937 editorial statement must be included here in its entirety. Note that although PR commits itself to "revolutionary" literature -- a term so vague that it can mean whatever it needs to mean whenever it is necessary -- it also commits itself to what it calls unequivocal independence of any political organizations. It also attributes a "totalitarian trend" in the arts to the American Communist Party and its literary critics, and absolves itself of any responsibility to that trend. It insinuates that a regrouping of fresh, young left-leaning artists is in the making, and PR will be the organ of its expression. PR "aspires to represent a new and dissident generation in American letters" now. It has a new commitment to what is called "democracy," and which will come to be known as "freedom of expression," anti-censorship politics and political and cultural autonomy -- all, in the end, political concepts that are associated with Trotsky in his exile period. In particular it is linked with Trotsky's theory of "permanent revolution," articulated by Trotsky when he defended himself against Stalin's "socialism in one country" in 1930. Though it seems vague now, the term "revolutionary literature" issues from a serious political definition which must be understood in the context of "permanent revolution," a concept which will be discussed later. The editorial statement, then, reads as follows:

As our readers know, the tradition of aestheticism has given way to a literature which, for its origin and final justification, looks beyond itself and deep into the historic process. But the forms of literary editorship, at once exacting and adventurous, which characterized the magazines of the aesthetic revolt, were of definite cultural value; and these forms PARTISAN PREVIEW will wish to adapt to the literature of the new period.

Any magazine, we believe, that aspires to a place in the vanguard of literature today, will be revolutionary in tendency; but we are also convinced that any such magazine will be unequivocally independent.

PARTISAN REVIEW is aware of its responsibility to the revolutionary movement in general, but we disclaim obligation to any of its organized political expressions. Indeed we think that the cause of revolutionary literature is best served by a policy of no commitments to any political party. Thus our underscoring of the factor of independence is based, not primarily on our differences with any one group, but on the conviction that literature in our period should be free of all factional dependence.

There is already a tendency in America for the more conscious social writers to identify themselves with a single organization, the Communist Party; with the result that they grow automatic in their political responses but increasingly less responsible in an artistic sense. And the Party literary critics, equipped with the zeal of vigilantes, begin to consolidate into aggressive political-literary amalgams as many tendencies as possible and to outlaw all dissenting opinion. This projection on the cultural field of factionalism in politics makes for literary cleavages which, in most instances, have little to do with literary issues, and which are more and more provocative of a ruinous bitterness among writers. Formerly associated with the Communist Party, PARTISAN REVIEW strove from the first against its drive to equate the interests of literature with those of factional politics. Our reappearance on an independent basis signifies our conviction that the totalitarian trend is inherent in that movement and that it can no longer be combatted from within.

But many other tendencies exist in American letters, and these we think, are turning from the senseless disciplines of the official Left to shape a new movement. The old movement will continue and, to judge by present indications, it will be reenforced more and more by academicians from the universities, by yesterday's celebrities and today's philistines. Armed to the teeth with slogans of revolutionary prudence, its official critics will revive the petty-bourgeois tradition of gentility, and with each new tragedy on the historic level they will call the louder for a literature of good cheer. Weak in genuine literary authority but equipped with all the economic and publicity powers of an authentic cultural bureaucracy, the old regime will seek to isolate the new by performing upon it the easy surgery of political falsification. Because the writers of the new grouping aspire to independence in politics as well as in art, they will be identified with fascism, sometimes directly, sometimes through the convenient medium of "Trotskyism." Every effort, in short, will be made to excommunicate the new generation, so that their writing and their politics may be regarded as making up a kind of diabolic totality; which would render unnecessary any sort of rational discussion of the merits of either.

Do we exaggerate? On the contrary, our prediction as to the line the old regime will take is based on the first maneuvers of a campaign which has already begun. Already, before it has appeared, PARTISAN REVIEW has been subjected to a series of attacks in the Communist Party press; already, with no regard for the fact - without, indeed, any

relevant facts to go by - they have attributed gratuitous political designs to PARTISAN REVIEW in an effort to confuse the primarily literary issue between us.

But PARTISAN REVIEW aspires to represent a new and dissident generation in American letters; it will not be dislodged from its independent position by any political campaign against it. And without ignoring the importance of the official movement as a sign of the times we shall know how to estimate its authority in literature. But we shall also distinguish, wherever possible, between the tendencies of this faction itself and the work of writers associated with it. For our editorial accent falls chiefly on culture and its broader social determinants. Conformity to a given social ideology or to a prescribed attitude or technique, will not be asked of our writers. On the contrary, 'our pages will be open to any tendency which is relevant to literature in our time. Marxism in culture, we think, is first of all an instrument of analysis and evaluation; and if, in the last instance, it prevails over other disciplines, it does so through the medium of democratic controversy. Such is the medium that PARTISAN REVIEW will want to provide in its pages.³³

It is clear from this editorial statement that although PR wanted to illustrate its separateness from the Communist Party, it by no means wanted to declare the "irrelevance of the social context to literature." Literature, however, came to have a new social meaning for the "active left-wing opposition to the Stalinists,"³⁴ and so did the editors and writers who made it their intellectual business to keep track of its newest trends. They saw themselves as an important cultural vanguard, the bearers of all that is new and, hence, most progressive in the arts. Rahv's, Farrell's, Macdonald's and even Mary McCarthy's view of the cultural vanguard of American literature was the aesthetic counterpart to Leon Trotsky's political theory of permanent revolution. As Rahv said in 1952, the intelligentsia to which he belonged

had the true pathos and conviction of a minority fighting under its own banner for its own ends; but that was back in the thirties and early forties. Its function then was to warn - and though the warning was not heeded the anti-Stalinists of that period played a vanguard role in that they were the first to discern the totalitarian essence of the Soviet myth. Since then, however, that minority political grouping has lost its bearings...³⁵

In its essence PR believed now, like Trotsky, that what is newest in the field of art is most in touch with social contradictions in society at a particular time, and therefore is most revolutionary, or, most able to warn. In no way, however, is its ability to warn served by prescriptions -- like the demand for proletarian themes, or censorship laws. As Rahv says, "what the avant-garde actually represents historically,..." is

the effort to preserve the integrity of art and the intellect amidst the conditions of alienation brought on by the major social forces of the modern era. The avant-garde has attempted to ward off the ravages of alienation in a number of ways: by means of developing a tradition of its own and cultivating its own group norms and standards, by resisting the bourgeois incentives to accommodation and perforce making a virtue of its separateness from the mass. That this strategy has in the main been successful is demonstrated by the only test that really counts -- the test of creative achievement. After all, it is chiefly the avant-garde which must be given credit for the production of most of the literary masterpieces of the past hundred years, from Madame Bovary to the Four Quartets; and the other arts are equally indebted to its venturesome spirit.³⁶

The idea of permanent revolution was central to the new ideology of PR; it was important to the general political outlook of the editors, which was directed against Stalin, for socialist democracy and, in the late thirties, in favour of Trotsky; it was important culturally, aesthetically, because a permanent revolution in the arts meant that good art only had to be committed to the continual experimentation with form and content among the most advanced writers, from Farrell to T.S. Eliot; it was important because the idea of permanent revolution is dependent on a notion of the internationalist character of the socialist revolution, and thus it gave Rahv and other editors political reason to call for the "Europeanization" of the radical American literary movement (via Malraux, Picasso, Gide, and even Trotsky, but most importantly, via the Surrealists in Paris, as well as in Mexico and London). This last point is especially important in terms

of the concept of an intelligentsia, because it was the European intellectuals who developed the concept of an intelligentsia as a new, progressive movement, contrary to its roots in the nineteenth century Russian aristocracy.³⁷ The editors of PR now "turned to the intellectual as the central figure of revolutionary art." Rahv's April 10, 1938 letter to Trotsky talks about the role of Partisan Review's intellectuals as "translators" of "political analysis" into "cultural metaphors and psychological perceptions" (4212). Gilbert connects this development to the event of the Moscow Trials. He says that

to Rahv and Phillips, as to many American intellectuals, the trials exposed the nature of the Soviet system, but perhaps more significantly, they aroused scepticism about the safety of intellectuals in any social system, and strengthened the belief that a creative act in a closed society was an act of revolution.³⁸

In April 1938, Rahv publicly identified himself with the intellectuals who were on trial in Moscow and with the man he called, "the scapegoat, the sin-bearer," "Pharmakos-Trotsky."³⁹ Then, in a 1941 essay, he declared that it was almost "an act of revolution" to publish T.S. Eliot in PR, since a number of readers had protested such an act.⁴⁰

As early as 7 July 1937 Dwight Macdonald was writing to Trotsky about "a group of writers in New York City . . . reviving the Partisan Review." He writes to him specifically to request that Trotsky contribute two articles, at \$50 apiece, for the new monthly, "an independent Marxist journal." Trotsky underscores the detail that Macdonald is on "the executive committee of the Committee For the Defense of Leon Trotsky."⁴¹ Macdonald's letter paved the way for a serious political and intellectual relationship between the editors of PR and Trotsky. On the 15th of July, Trotsky agrees to collaborate with PR, a journal "ideologically directed against poisons of both the 2nd and 3rd Internationals." He begins to link up people, introduce them and their ideas to others in different parts of the world: he

mentions Diego Rivera because he, too, had thought to produce a revolutionary Marxist magazine devoted to cultural questions (Macdonald will pick up on this much later in their correspondence). Trotsky says that he understands how PR can be an "independent Marxist journal" in the sense that it is not tied to any political organization, but he maintains that it must always depend on fundamental principles which, in the end, cannot be separated from a certain political orientation. The polemizing begins with the next exchange: Macdonald writes back to Trotsky on 23 August, still five months before the first issue of the renewed PR was to come out. Macdonald wants to clear up any misunderstandings that Trotsky might have about the nature of the magazine. But it is clear that the editors of PR are somewhat confused about their orientation, and Trotsky makes good use of this later in their correspondence. A tension seems to be emerging between the goals of editing a cultural journal, and battling the socialist revolution on two political fronts -- against Stalinism in Soviet Russia, and for a new Leninist party in America.

Macdonald knows full well that PR will be branded "Trotskyist" by the "local Stalinist literateurs." He says that "the New Masses gang is already describing us as stooges of the Fourth International." But he says that the editors "are by no means ashamed or frightened by the connections they establish between your [Trotsky's] ideas and our magazine." Macdonald closes modestly: "we are very eager to have you write for us on cultural and literary questions, knowing, of course, your approach to cultural problems fully involves your entire political position."⁴² And, "ay, there's the rub," on two counts: PR adopts the programme of Permanent Revolution to cultural questions inasmuch as it can, but experiences conflict between its commitment to avant-garde literature and art, and its political struggle against Stalinism and for liberation. In any case, Trotsky's ideas

about revolutionary cultural developments and art are part and parcel of his wider political goals and practices: he wants to link artists and their communities to one another in order that they may do cultural battle as a unified group.

For this reason Trotsky writes to his American representative, James Burnham, on 22 March 1938 (7458). Burnham was a writer and political organizer who had befriended many of the artists and writers associated with Partisan Review and "The League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism."⁴³ Burnham writes back to Trotsky on 12 April 1938, giving his opinions of the various editors of Partisan Review (407). He says that "they divide more or less naturally into three groups." Of the novelist and critic Mary McCarthy, an original editor who has just resigned, he says:

She is a handsome, black-haired Irish girl, of some wit and shrewdness. She is apparently a kind of literary "career woman", who sees the anti-Stalinist left intellectualism as a good current racket. She was living with Philip Rahv when, suddenly, two months or so ago she married Edmund Wilson. The other board members were shocked and wounded by this incident. For her, the Partisan Review had proved a convenient stepping stone. This little episode is not, however, without a collateral significance in estimating the magazine.

With none of the other editors does Burnham go into any detail about their physical appearance, or their sexual activity. Nor does he impute motives which would lead us to believe that any of McCarthy's colleagues were as "opportunistic" as she. But no other woman participated in the editorial decisions of Partisan Review in the period under examination.

Burnham's assessments of the editors continues in a more systematic fashion; each editor is an item with a number. First he assesses George L.K. Morris; second, Dwight Macdonald; and, third, he lumps together F.W. Dupee, William Phillips and Philip Rahv. Burnham writes MacDonald when it should read Macdonald, but this is a common error in the letters:

1. George L.K. Morris is the brother of Newbold Morris, elected last Fall on the Republican-Fusion-A. L. P. ticket as President of the new City Council. He, I understand, supplies most of the money - he comes from one of the oldest families in New York (the Gouverneur Morris family of pre-Revolutionary days). His only serious interest is abstract art, which he collects with impeccable taste in his pent-house apartment, and paints with care and sensitivity though not great profundity. He was a classmate at Yale of MacDonald and Dupee, and joined them 7 or 8 years ago in a short-lived magazine called Miscellany.

2. Dwight MacDonald is a most delightful and dynamic and rather hare-brained person. Until two years ago he was one of the editors of Fortune. He broke with Fortune in a thoroughly honorable manner: He was assigned to write the famous articles on the U.S. Steel Corporation. They published the first instalment in a greatly censored form, but even then Wall Street howled. Fortune insisted on chopping up the remainder, and MacDonald parted. He had the ironic consolation of having used most of his salary to buy up stock of Time, Inc. (the owners of Fortune, as well as Life, Time, March of Time, etc.). He is not a consistent political thinker, and I don't think ever will be. It is hard to define his views, but they are something like what a young and energetic Charles Beard's might be. He is strongly anti-Stalinist. He has been on the whole a loyal sympathizer of ours for some years. He was first attracted to the American Workers Party, before the fusion. He was an active member of the Trotsky Defense Committee.

3. The remaining three - Dupee, Philips, Rahv - were all members of the C.P., Philips and Rahv for several years, Dupee for a little over a year. They are all literary rather than political, though they are becoming gradually more politicalized. The first Trial really broke Philips and Rahv, but they were afraid to split and didn't know how or where they would be able to write (which was a primary concern). They lingered in a spirit of desolation. Dupee joined the C.P. impulsively, after a three year period in which he had nearly committed suicide while living first in the country and then in little Mexican towns, unable to do anything or get oriented. He was put in charge of the book review section of New Masses. They have developed steadily in the past year and a half - then, for example, they were planning a magazine which would be so "non-political" that the Stalinists would still support it (as is usual in such cases, they rationalize their own timidities into theories about the backwardness of the American scene, the necessity of leading others along toward the light...). Rahv seems to have come farthest - both he and Dupee regard themselves as revolutionaries. All three, and MacDonald also, are ready to come along at once with the new defense organization. (It must be remembered, however, that they are not strong and hardened people - as yet, at any rate.)

Burnham then ventures a guess as to why Macdonald wrote to Trotsky in the first place. And he asks Trotsky to respect confidentiality "for the time being."

He says:

I think MacDonald first wrote you simply because he is a man who "does things," who gets an idea and at once carries it out, like the Duchess of Parma in Stendhal's novel. He wrote a long reply to your first long letter, but it was vetoed by vote of the board which then assigned Rahv to draft another.

I won't go on at this time to interpretations of my own, since I haven't time. I hope these facts will be useful. They are, of course, confidential. The editors are all personal friends of mine. They do not realize that I might be in correspondence with you. That is the better way, I think, for the time being.

At the same time as Partisan Review brought together the New York intellectuals and their work in the thirties, Paris was thriving with the new and avant-garde literature of the early Surrealists — Louis Aragon, Philippe Soupault, and André Breton. As early as 1919, Breton published Mont de piété, a collection of poems which called into question "the nature and goals of the poetic act, . . . along with the order of things, the social consensus."⁴⁴ It was in March of this year that Breton and his two friends launched their first "small magazine," sarcastically titled Littérature, a review devoted to Dada --the precursor of surrealism— and its outrages. It was only one year earlier that Tristan Tzara had written in his Manifeste dada 1918:

Tout produit du dégoût susceptible de devenir une négation de la famille, est **dada**; protestation aux poings de tout son être en action destructive: **DADA**; connaissance de tous les moyens rejetés jusqu'à présent par le sexe pudique du compromis commode et de la politesse: **DADA**; abolition de la logique, danse des impuissants de la création: **DADA**; de toute hiérarchie et équation social installée pour les valeurs par nos valets: **DADA**; chaque objet, tous les objets, les sentiments et les obscurités, les apparitions et le choc précis des lignes parallèles, sont des moyens pour le combat: **DADA**; abolition de la mémoire: **DADA**; abolition de l'archéologie: **DADA**; abolition des prophètes: **DADA**; abolition du futur: **DADA**; croyance absolue indiscutable dans chaque dieu produit immédiat de la spontanéité: **DADA**; saut élégant et sans préjudice d'une harmonie à l'autre

sphère; trajectoire d'une parole jetée comme un disque sonore cri; respecter toutes les individualités dans leur folie du moment: sérieuse, craintive, timide, ardente, vigoureuse, décidée, enthousiaste; peler son église de tout accessoire inutile et lourd; cracher comme une cascade lumineuse la pensée désobligeante ou amoureuse, ou la choyer — avec la vive satisfaction que c'est tout à fait égal -- avec la même intensité dans le buisson, pur d'insectes pour le sang bien né, et doré de corps d'archanges, de son âme. Liberté: DADA DADA DADA, hurlement des douleurs crispées, entrelacement des contraires et de toutes les contradictions, des grotesques, des inconséquences: LA VIE.⁴⁵

Littérature, like PR, went through a number of transformations and revampings, most of which were based on its entry into the political arena, and the consequent connecting or, as the case may be, shattering, of important cultural or political alliances. As Franklin Rosemont has said in André Breton and the First Principles of Surrealism, "Dada in Paris did not assume a political position. The meaning of communism, of class struggle, of the Red revolution in Russia, would become clear to Breton and his friends only later, long after the liquidation of Dada."⁴⁶ It is important to note however, that the influence of Dada had filtered through to the United States by Frenchmen Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia, thus making way for later links between Breton and Partisan Review.

In 1919, there were more important things in the pre-Surrealist world: until 1924, the Surrealist would explore automatic writing and the unconscious, Breton would write the first truly "surrealist work," Les Champs magnetiques, with Soupault, in 1920, and later, alone, Clair de terre in 1923. In that magic year, 1924, he wrote Les Pas perdus, in which he laid the philosophical foundations for a definition of surrealism.

One must not forget that Breton had, in 1921, visited Freud in Vienna, and that this meeting was crucial to the transition that he and others made from Dada to "revolutionary surrealism." It gave Breton every reason to take fancy, whim and other seemingly irrational ways of seeing the world quite seriously, whereas before

he had treated them as conduits for lampooning prevailing values for the sake of lampooning them, and thus accomplishing the meritless cause of shocking an already hostile audience. Psychoanalysis, however, had a purpose, a practice which was essentially didactic, and at the same time did not undermine non-rational thought processes. With Marxism, only Freudian theory had claimed to show the way that the "automatic" or "automatist" human spirit could achieve its liberation. It "permitted disentanglement of automatic writing from the sphere of spiritualist mystification; permitted its use as an instrument of poetic discovery and self-revelation."⁴⁷ Automatism avoids "l'erreur rationaliste."⁴⁸

In 1922 began the 'sleep period' in which the surrealists would hypnotize themselves and then automatically produce poetry. René Creval, Robert Desnos and Benjamin Péret figured in these séance-like experiences. (According to conversations with Jean van Heijenoort, Trotsky's secretary throughout most of the thirties, and a friend to Péret, van Heijenoort had tried to get Trotsky to read Péret's poetry in Norway in early 1936. Trotsky, even though he wanted Péret among his comrades, could not read the verse, largely because his tastes were so conservative.)⁴⁹ The concept of inspiration became all-important, the beginning and the end of "revolutionary" feeling, of poetry and of life. Those surrealists who sympathized with this approach to the world, who refused, already, to accept any restrictions on the creative potential of human life, formed themselves into a group of artists in December of 1924 around the new review, La Révolution surréaliste, the cover of which proclaimed: "Il faut aboutir à une nouvelle déclaration des droits de l'homme." It is clear from this motto that the surrealists were moving closer to a political view of the world, if not a socialist programme.

Out of the group's collective dreaming, Breton worked toward his definition of surrealism as articulated in the first Manifeste of 1924. Most importantly the

manifesto declared that imaginative writing is the means by which humankind can put an end to "the servitude of the mind." He explains that

Le surréalisme poétique, auquel je consacre cette étude, s'est appliqué jusqu'ici à rétablir dans sa vérité absolue le dialogue, en dégageant les deux interlocuteurs des obligations de la politesse. Chacun d'eux poursuit simplement son soliloque, sans chercher à en tirer un plaisir dialectique particulier et à en imposer le moins du monde à son voisin, . . . Les mots, les images ne s'offrent que comme tremplins à l'esprit de celui qui écoute.⁵⁰

And,

L'esprit qui plonge dans le surréalisme revit avec exaltation la meilleure part de son enfance. C'est un peu pour lui la certitude de qui, étant en train de se noyer, repasse, en moins d'une minute, tout l'insurmontable de sa vie.⁵¹

Breton defines poets according to their ability to be surrealist. He lists his poets:

Hugo est surréaliste quand il n'est pas bête...

Bertrand est surréaliste dans le passé...

Poe est surréaliste dans l'aventure.

Baudelaire est surréaliste dans la morale.

Rimbaud est surréaliste dans la pratique de la vie et ailleurs...

Fargue est surréaliste dans l'atmosphère...

Saint-John Perse est surréaliste à distance...⁵²

Only one year later Breton and other prominent French intellectuals identified their goals with those of the communist movement, the only serious non-conformist movement within their reach. The communist intellectuals around the Party's cultural and theoretical journal, Clarté, provided a focus for their concerns. What they often referred to as "the valid experiment" had begun; never again could Breton, for one, return to the Dadaist experiments. No more novelty and outrageousness for their own sake. No more "nihilista anarchizmus," Breton wrote "Lâchez tout. Lâchez Dada . . . Partez sur les routes," and as Marguerite

Bonnet comments, "la chasse spirituelle va reprendre."⁵³ Then in the summer of 1925 the surrealists joined forces with the Communist party. The occasion was a protest against France's initiative in Morocco, and the result was that Breton and others wanted to know more about communism and the Russian Revolution. It was at this time also that Breton read Trotsky's biography of Lenin, a book which was to influence his political attitudes in the coming years.⁵⁴

In October of 1925 Breton wrote a passionate review of Lenin in La Révolution surréaliste, and his admiration for the communist movement in Europe became more than apparent:

Il faut lire les brillantes, les justes, les définitives, les magnifiques pages de réfutation consacrées aux Lénines de Gorki et de Wells. Il faut méditer longtemps sur le chapitre qui traite de ce recueil d'écrits d'enfants consacré à la vie et à la mort de Lénine, en tous points dignes du commentaire, et sur lesquels l'auteur exerce une critique si fine et si désespérée: "Lénine aimait à pêcher. Par une journée chaude il prenait sa ligne et s'assyait sur le bord de l'eau, et il pensait tout le temps à la manière dont on pourrait améliorer la vie des ouvriers et des paysans."⁵⁵

Breton ends his review on a note of rapture: "Nous sommes révolutionnaires de la tête aux pieds, nous l'avons été, nous le resterons jusqu'au bout." Nadeau makes special mention of the respect that Breton cultivated for Trotsky as a result of reading this book. He says:

Another phenomenon, apparently less significant but whose consequences were not negligible, added its effect to that of events themselves: this was Breton's reading of Leon Trotsky's Lenin, a work which showed, in a new light for the surrealists, the extent of the overthrow effected in eastern Europe, as well as the boldness and lucidity its protagonists had evidenced. What were Sade, Borel, or Rimbaud, compared to these titans who had solved for themselves, before doing so for all, the problems of man's fate? . . . And it was in a tone of the most enthusiastic admiration that he hailed both the Russian Revolution and an admiration which he maintained for a long time, still characterizing in 1938 the period that came to an end with the outbreak of the Second World war as "the age of Lautreamont, of Freud, and of Trotsky." These three names . . . summarized for Breton the most inspiring effort to transcend poetry, to explore man, and transform society.⁵⁶

Despite Breton's Légitime défense,⁵⁷ the Clarté group could not convince their leaders in the Party that the Surrealists would maintain a serious political commitment to communism. Breton's interest in communism had more to do with the philosophical heritage of the movement in Hegel's dialectical idealism and the humanism which threaded Lenin to Marx, and Trotsky to them all, than it did with practical party discipline. The latter, he feared, would destroy the humanist's "nonmaterialistic aspiration," his "Desire." Their disapproval of him, however, seemed to encourage Breton. In 1927 he joined the Party alongside Louis Aragon, Paul Éluard, Benjamin Péret and Pierre Unik. Pierre Naville, who had joined the Party much earlier, was, in many ways, their political leader, being both committed to surrealism, and to communism. As co-director of Clarté he offered the five men space for their poetry, and for essays which revealed disagreements with more orthodox party officials. But he could not prevent the "crisis" which ensued. "Since they either could not or would not become political militants, their adherence was formal and had only the value of a manifestation, sincere and deliberate of course, but by which the Party, while admitting them into its ranks, was not deceived."⁵⁸ The pamphlet, Au grand jour (Paris, [May] 1927), written and signed by the "Five," Breton, Aragon, Éluard, Péret and Unik, documents this crisis, the exchange of letters which took place and the hostility that fomented.

Antonin Artaud, Philippe Soupault and Roger Vitrac make a decision not to be involved in politics at all; Naville prods Breton and others to strengthen their commitments; and Breton suffers through a position which separates him from both the Party which represents his political ideas at that time, and the Surrealist movement which mothered his art. Marguerite Bonnet, at present a notable member of L'Institut Léon Trotsky in Paris, claims that for Breton, then, the problem was a "question of affirming the willingness to participate fully in the

revolutionary struggle and of refusing the artistic alibi, while maintaining the autonomy of the poetic quest."⁵⁹ In 1928 Breton wrote one of his more popular narratives, Nadja (Paris: Gallimard), and in 1929 La Révolution surréaliste ceased publication. Breton saw it as his responsibility to probe the group in and around the Party, the movement, Clarté, other journals such as L'Esprit, Documents, Le Grand jeu, and individual Dadaists and Surrealists who might or might not have some ideas as to how "the surrealist experiment" might, through common action, be fulfilled. Breton sent them all a letter on 12 February 1929, the responses to which he thought he would use to discredit undesirables -- such as Soupault, Vitrac and Artaud -- and unmask frauds. The recipients were: Alexandre, Arp, Baron, Carrive, Caupenne, Crevel, Desnos, Duhamel, Éluard, Ernst, Genbach, Goemans, Magritte, Malkine, Mesens, Miro, Morise, Nougé, Prévert, Man Ray, Sadoul, Tanguy, Thirion; Artaud (expelled); Boiffard, Gérard, Leiris, Limbour (estranged); the Clarté group: Bernier, Craistre, Fegy, Naville, Altman, Guitard; the editors of Le Grand Jeu: Daumal, Delons, Gilbert-Lecomte, Harfaux, Henry, Sima, Vailland, Bouilly; the editors of L'Esprit (formerly Philosophies): Guterman, Lefebvre, Morhange, Politzer; former Dadaists: Duchamp, Fraenkel, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Tzara, Picabia; friends and sympathizers: Audard, Baldensperger, Bernard, Bousquet, Kasyade, Ristitch (i.e. Marko Ristic), Savitry, Valentin, Vidal, Bataille (Georges Bataille was one of Breton's most virulent oppositionists: "too many fucking idealists in Breton's group" he said.)⁶⁰ Then, after a few replies to the letter had been received, an élite group was formed, and invited to meet on 11 March at the Bar du Château, and therein the politics, both personal and organizational, of the new politicized surrealist movement were institutionalized, and the lines of cultural battle were drawn. Among other matters on the agenda, Aragon, Péret and others suggested that the

group discuss Stalin's recent treatment of Leon Trotsky. The debate on the treatment of Leon Trotsky was, however, put aside; those who would participate in the debate, said Breton, must "qualify."⁶¹

This, then, marks the beginning of a break with orthodox Soviet communism, and sensitivity to the plight, the politics and the personality of Leon Trotsky. Those who qualified for Breton's fellowship were invited to meet again, and although the discussion about Trotsky took a long time to develop on clear lines, it was one year later that the newest version of the revolutionary surrealist journal was produced. Le Surréalisme, au service de la révolution lasted from 1930 to 1933, and it devoted itself not to the Party member, not to the purist surrealist, but to the "revolutionary intellectual." In this way it addressed the same kind of person that Partisan Review addressed. It also gave the intellectuals who had not aligned with either one or the other of the branches of the communist movement time to reflect and decide with whom their sympathies lay. In 1932, notable intellectuals, such as Louis Aragon, opted for the Party, repudiating their decadent surrealist past. The schism in the group became clear, and the revolutionary intellectuals chose neither surrealism, nor party politics; they wanted to be true to themselves at the same time as they wanted to be true to the quality of revolution, if not to its actuality. In this vein, then, they chose the path of total liberation, and became outsiders of the larger communist movement. As early as 1937 Breton, however, qualified this liberation when he wrote: "toute licence en art, sauf contre la révolution prolétarienne." This line appeared in an unpublished document found in Trotsky's household papers at Harvard: MS Rus. 13.1 (15892). It is written in Breton's hand, in his customary turquoise ink, and it appears at the bottom of the second page (of three long pages). Though some lines in the document are underscored or crossed out, this is the only line which is written in

upper case letters. In the Archives the document is entitled "Art and Revolution," and is part of the folder entitled "Other Compositions." No published document exists just like this one, but the line we are referring to here appears in a truncated form (in italics) in "Pour un art révolutionnaire et indépendante," the manifesto prepared by Breton and Trotsky in 1938, but signed by the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera and Breton (25 July 1938).⁶² Among active Communists, only Leon Trotsky, and certain intellectuals (such as Pierre Naville)⁶³ in the circles of what came to be known as the Fourth International, tolerated such an ideology. Needless to say, Louis Aragon and Georges Sadoul, the two French surrealists who travelled to the U.S.S.R. in late 1930, were not part of these circles. The infamous "Aragon Affair" represented a turning point in the evolution of the French Surrealist Movement which cannot be overlooked. Its influence reached as far as Mexico and New York, where writers and artists, whether "surrealists" or not, felt obliged to take sides.

Critics still write about the "Affair," and the consequences it had for both the "movement," and Aragon's poetry itself. Lucille F. Becker, for example, talks about "transitional works":

Aragon has described the texts he wrote from 1925 to 1931 as the history of a progressive disintoxication with words, a transition from Surrealist images to images which echo the cry of the masses and sing the beauty of the revolution.⁶⁴

This transitional period was filled with a lot of pain for him: Becker reports that Aragon had tried at one point to commit suicide ("during a trip to Venice").⁶⁵ Aragon himself describes these "cinq années" in his book, Pour un réalisme socialiste:

Cinq années, j'ai passé cinq années, prise entre divers petits dégoûts, le culte disproportionné d'un mode poétique que nous étions forgé, mes amis et moi, et le grand tourbillon où j'étais tenté de me jeter. Cinq années d'hésitation, de contre-marches. Ce fut là le beau temps et l'éclat du surréalisme. C'est alors, c'est au bout de ce laps de craintes et de scrupules que je fis une recontre qui devait changer ma vie.⁶⁶

What were the circumstances under which Aragon made his expedition to the Soviet Union? Only three months after the publication of the first issue of Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution, Louis Aragon and his companion, Elsa Triolet, left for Moscow (October 30, 1930).⁶⁷ Shortly thereafter, Georges Sadoul followed, and he and Aragon were then invited to sit in on the Second International Congress of Revolutionary Writers in Kharkov on November 6, 1930. Herbert Gershman reports that at least on two occasions Aragon took the floor at the Congress to explain various positions of the Surrealists on art or politics. He reports further, however, that

just prior to leaving the Soviet Union, Aragon and Sadoul sign a letter dated "Moscou, le 1^{er} décembre 1930," in which they condemn Trotsky, Freud, and Breton's Second manifeste "to the extent it goes counter to the teachings of dialectical materialism."⁶⁸

The Surrealists did not expect such a statement from their comrades. It came as no real surprise that Aragon, who had before the Kharkov Congress requested readmission to the French Communist Party, had his request granted in early 1931.⁶⁹ The French Party would, of course, be much friendlier to Aragon now that he had been to Kharkov, and now that he stood apart from the more "decadent" Surrealists. The Congress position on Surrealism corresponded to the French Communists' position, and Aragon had been present for the discussions pertaining to the position. On the Congress Agenda it appeared in this way: "L'établissement d'une sorte d'un inventaire de la littérature révolutionnaire."⁷⁰ The Congress resolved that the surrealist movement was ultra-left, but that it would develop such that its best cadre would eventually adopt a proletarian ideology in life and art -- as did, for example, Louis Aragon. The resolution read in this fashion:

Surréalisme. Ce mouvement constitue une réaction des jeunes générations d'intellectuels de l'élite petite-bourgeoise, provoquée

par les contradictions du capitalisme dans la troisième phase de son développement. Les surréalistes n'ayant pas été capable, dès le début, de procéder à l'analyse marxiste approfondie de cette réaction culturelle contre laquelle ils s'élèvent, cherchent une issue dans la littérature en se formant une méthode de création spécifique. Les premières tentatives de lutte au moyen de cette méthode contre l'intellectualisme bourgeois, tout en se confinant encore aux conceptions idéalistes ont facilité à quelques membres de groupe le passage à l'idéologie communiste, qui se traduit quoique encore d'une manière insuffisamment nette, dans les interventions des surréalistes en politique. L'acuité de la lutte de classes s'est fait sentir, même dans ce groupe, par l'élimination de ses rangs de ses éléments à tendance bourgeois. Le véritable visage de "l'opposition intérieure," visage réactionnaire, s'est dévoilé après la dislocation du groupe et le passage déclaré de l'opposition dans le camp de la bourgeoisie, tandis que le noyau central, qui avait conservé l'appellation surréaliste, continuait à évoluer, non sans tâtonnements et sans à-coups, vers le communisme. Le développement permet d'espérer que la meilleure partie du groupe surréaliste actuel, tout en continuant d'évoluer vers le matérialisme dialectique, passera définitivement à l'idéologie prolétarienne après avoir révisé sa théorie sur la "décomposition de la bourgeoisie, conséquence du développement de ses contradictions intérieures," ainsi que toutes les erreurs qui ont trouvé leur expression dans le Second Manifeste du Surréalisme.⁷¹

The Congress, then recognized what it saw as problems among the Surrealists, but it had a certain faith in the core of the group. It suspects that the group will almost naturally move toward a "proletarian ideology" after having revised its theory on "the decomposition of the bourgeoisie -- the product of interior contradictions."

André Breton, for one, could not accept Aragon's actions. He and Paul Éluard had just published their L'Immaculée conception, a book which relied heavily on psychoanalytic thought. In a radio interview with André Parinaud, Breton agrees that the "Kharkov Affaire" signaled the sudden deterioration of the literary scene in France.⁷² Breton also attributes much in Aragon's actions from 1930 to 1932 to his relationship with Elsa Triolet. Triolet soon became Aragon's wife, and she was the sister of Lili Brik, intimate of Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky (he had committed suicide earlier in 1930). It is said that Triolet had

been "returning home and was eager to show her friend [Aragon] the wonders of the new regime." Gershman maintains that the overt purpose of the "anodyne trip" -- which Triolet had suggested in the first place -- was "a family reunion with her sister."⁷³ Breton says:

...Observez que ce voyage, qui allait être lourd de surprises - et de conséquences -- n'était nullement de l'initiative d'Aragon mais bien d'Elsa Triolet qu'il venait de connaître et qui le conviait à l'accompagner. A distance et telle qu'elle s'est définie par la suite, il y a tout lieu de penser qu'elle imposa et obtint là-bas ce qu'elle voulut. Il n'en semble pas moins que si Sadoul ne les avait pas suivis pour se soustraire aux recherches policières, tout eût pu se passer différemment. Ce sont les échanges de vues entre Aragon et Sadoul isolés de nous - échanges sur quoi pèse, en ce qui concerne Sadoul, le sentiment de la situation critique où il s'est mis - qui vont les amener à prendre une série de décisions dont les effets déborderont le cadre du surréalisme et se feront sentir jusqu'aujourd'hui et au-delà.⁷⁴

André Thirion, at least, ascribes more intentionality to Aragon than this. He says Aragon had a genuine interest in the items on literature on the Congress agenda.⁷⁵

Roger Garaudy does not enter the debate of whether or not Aragon went to the Congress because of Triolet, but he does attest to the importance of Elsa Triolet in Aragon's life: "C'est pour elle, par elle, qu'il va recommencer à écrire. Et à vivre."⁷⁶ Garaudy stresses the positive effect of Triolet on Aragon's work. He puts it this way:

Le commencement d'une vie: vivre pour, et non plus seulement vivre contre. Aragon a crié mille fois cette reconnaissance éperdue à Elsa.⁷⁷

Aragon's poetry breathed new life. "Cantique à Elsa" is a good example of this; the "Ouverture" begins this way:

Je te touche et je vois ton corps et tu respirez
Ce ne sont plus les jours du vivre séraps
C'est toi tu vas tu viens et je suis ton empire
Pour le meilleur et pour le pire
Et jamais tu ne fus si lointaine à mon gré

No stops and no commas, the poem continues for six more verses as if in one breath, and ends celebrating "Treize ans c'est comme un jour et c'est un feu de paille/ Qui brûle à nos pieds maille à maille/ Le magique tapis de notre isolement" (1942).⁷⁸

It is amusing that even the article in the Toronto Star on 29 December 1982, only five days after Aragon's recent death, comments on Aragon's "celebration" of his marriage to Triolet. He died at the age of 85, having been "a Communist party activist for 55 years." French Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy is said to have "paid tribute to Aragon's fidelity to communism" these many years, a commitment which was fulfilled by few of his surrealist comrades of the thirties.⁷⁹

Despite disenchantments on both Aragon's and Breton's side, the final break did not come until the Surrealists came to Aragon's defense in 1930 over a suspended five-year prison sentence. A poem which Breton did not much like, Le Front rouge, was written while Aragon was in the U.S.S.R. It was a long revolutionary poem which sang the praises of the proletariat's domination of the bourgeoisie. Certain verses called for the murder of leaders of the French government, and for this Aragon was convicted for inciting soldiers to mutiny and provocation of murder. Breton wrote a defense called Misère de la poésie. L'Affaire Aragon devant l'opinion publique,⁸⁰ but Mary Ann Caws says that it was a defense of Le Front rouge "as poetry, therefore not to be taken seriously on a political level."⁸¹ The break between Aragon and Breton was imminent. Caws explains that

under pressure (according to some historians), Aragon, having just returned from the Soviet Union, renounced Breton's defense of him and split off from the Surrealists. The repercussions were great, protests on one side or the other came in from all over the world, insisting that the "content" of a poem be restricted to the realm of poetry, or refusing to relegate it only to that realm.⁸²

But the greatest repercussion was the "volte-face d'Aragon qui part surréaliste et revient staliniste."⁸³ Most other Surrealists rejected Stalin and turned toward Trotsky, just as the editors of Partisan Review were to do. The splits were irreparable.

It is time to examine the specific relationship between the editors of the revised Partisan Review and Leon Trotsky, especially within the context of their correspondence with each other, and with André Breton. For these the representatives of the cultural and/or political avant-garde tried, in the face of communist dissent and with great risk of becoming isolated, to continue the revolution outside of the Soviet Union. In his essay on "Surrealism: the Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," literary critic Walter Benjamin calls our attention to the political and philosophical conflict which characterised the Surrealists and their comrades, and underlined their mission. He says:

If it is the double task of the revolutionary intelligentsia to overthrow the intellectual predominance of the bourgeoisie and to make contact with the proletarian masses, the intelligentsia has failed almost entirely in the second part of this task because it can no longer be performed contemplatively. And yet this has hindered hardly anybody from approaching it again and again as if it could, and calling for proletarian poets, thinkers, and artists. To counter this, Trotsky had to point out-as early as Literature and Revolution-that such artists would only emerge from a victorious revolution. In reality, it is far less a matter of making the artist of bourgeois origin into a master of 'proletarian art' than of deploying him, even at the expense of his artistic activity, at important points in this sphere of imagery. Indeed, might not perhaps the interruption of his 'artistic career' be an essential part of his new function? ⁸⁴

Notes

¹(N.Y.: Vintage, 1962 and 1965), p. 51, p. 165, p. 12

²James T. Farrell: The Revolutionary Socialist Years (N.Y.: N.Y.U. Press, 1978), p. 7.

³Partisan Review may be abbreviated to PR throughout the thesis. Page references may appear in the text in parentheses.

⁴See Keywords (London: Croom Helm, 1976), pp. 141-2, for definitions.

⁵Alfred Kazin, Starting Out in the Thirties, p. 65.

⁶Alan Wald, James T. Farrell: The Revolutionary Socialist Years, p. 58.

⁷Kazin, p. 65.

⁸See Edward E. Chielens, The Literary Journal in America, 1900-1950. A guide to Information Sources. (Detroit: Gale Research, 1977).

⁹(N.Y.: John Wiley, 1968), vii.

¹⁰New Masses became the leading radical literary periodical before 1930. It was famous for its virulent attacks on other leftwing literary journals which it considered revisionist or "bohemian." Its favourite targets were Max Eastman's Masses, and V.F. Calverton's Modern Monthly (sometimes called the Modern Quarterly, from 1923 to 1932, and 1938 to 1940). When Eastman was attacked because of his "Greenwich Village art rebellion," he replied in Modern Monthly in 1934 that the editors of the New Masses "by contrast are carrying forward the banner of proletarian revolution . . . a piece of fabricated balihoo from start to finish." Calverton, too, was "one of the maverick leftist editors of the 1920s and 1930s, promoting black radical literature."

¹¹John P. Diggins, The American Left in the Twentieth Century (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973).

¹²Edmund Wilson, "The Literary Consequences of the Crash," The Shores of Light (New York: Farar, Straus and Young, 1952), p. 496.

¹³James Gilbert, "Literature and Revolution in the United States: The Partisan Review," Journal of Contemporary History: Literature and Society. (April 1967), Vol. 2, No. 2 p. 12. Gilbert uses the word "avant-garde" -- as he says the editors of PR did -- to designate a group of modern writers including James Joyce, Marcel Proust, T.S. Eliot, Franz Kafka, etc. For a better explanation of why intellectuals joined and later quit the communist movement, see Daniel Aaron, Writers on the Left (New York: Harcourt, Brace, World, 1961).

¹⁴(N.Y.: Modern Library, 1932, 1934, 1935).

¹⁵p. 147.

¹⁶See Diggins, pp. 73-75. Kazin refers to the same group as the "Old Left," p. 76. See also Daniel Aaron, pp. 40-42.

¹⁷(N.Y.: Boni and Liveright, 1919).

¹⁸Gilbert, p. 120.

¹⁹Chielens, p. 8.

²⁰For excellent documentation of the nature of the break see letters from Florence Becker, a lesser known writer who was excluded from the League, to Trotsky, June 1939, in Appendix A, Rus MS 13.1 (289). This letter is in the Restricted Section of the Trotsky Archives at Houghton Library, Harvard University, which opened to the public on 2 January 1980. All subsequent letters will have the archive number enclosed in brackets, and unless otherwise mentioned, are from this section (Rus MS 13.1). Some letters are reproduced in Appendix A, and appear in numerical order.

²¹See Appendix A (14582).

²²See Appendix A for the letter (9356).

²³David Caute, Communism and the French Intellectuals: 1914-1960. (London: André Deutsch, 1964), p. 238.

²⁴Fontamara, trans. Harvey Ferguson, foreword by Malcolm Cowley (New York: Atheneum, 1960); La Condition humaine, Edition revue et corrigée (Paris: Gallimard, 1946). See also Kazin, p. 18.

²⁵Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Über Kunst und Literatur (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1967), p. 157.

²⁶Kazin, p. 16. Trotsky was infuriated by New Republic's "Stalinist" ideology during the Moscow Trials. In a letter to the anarchist, Carlo Tresca, 6 October 1937, he says: "The executioner is hideous, but more hideous is the priest (New Republic) in the service of the executioner." See the Tresca-Trotsky letters in the appendix, (10588 and 10589).

²⁷Trotsky on Literature and Art, ed. Paul Siegel (New York; Pathfinder, 1970), pp. 205-6.

²⁸See appendix on "The League" for letters exchanged between Trotsky and Farrell.

²⁹"MacLeish and Proletarian Poetry," Partisan Review (May 1936), p. 19.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹p. 11.

³²"Literature and Revolution in the United States: The Partisan Review, Journal of Contemporary History: Literature and Society (April 1967), p. 168. See also Lionel Trilling's incisive introduction to his only novel, a novel of the Radical Thirties, The Middle of the Journey (New York: Avon, 1947 and 1975). Trilling makes more of the discouragement than Gilbert; he talks about the moral turmoil of the intellectuals who "had been in a tenuous relation with the Communist Party through some of its so-called fringe activities." He continues: "Our relation to the Party deteriorated . . . after Hitler came to power early 1933 and soon (certainly by 1937) it was nothing but antagonistic . . . to what is now called Stalinism." (xv)

³³(December 1937), pp. 3-4.

³⁴Wald, p. 6.

³⁵Philip Rahv, Literature and the Sixth Sense (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p. 180.

³⁶p. 182.

³⁷See Gilbert on European culture. He stresses the importance of Rahv's and Phillips' appreciation of André Malraux and Ignazio Silone, two important revolutionary writers who "had made a revolutionary the hero of their novels, and by doing so they opened their works to the exploration of the clash of cultures and consciousness which any profound social upheaval would exhibit. They had opened a literary discussion of the problems of western civilization to which Marxism was relevant." p. 170.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹PR (April 1938), p. 9.

⁴⁰Literature and the Sixth Sense, p. X, Chapter 1.

⁴¹This letter is in the Closed Section of the Trotsky Archives at Houghton Library, Harvard University, in file Rus MS 13.1 (2836).

⁴²The letter reads as follows:

Because of its connections and the character of its contributors, most of whom are more or less allied with your program, the Partisan Review will doubtless be branded as Trotskyist by the local Stalinist literateurs. In fact, even prior to the appearance of our first number, the New Masses gang is already describing us as stooges of the Fourth International. Although we think the description inaccurate, we are by no means ashamed or frightened by the connections they establish between your ideas and our magazine.

We are very eager to have you write for us on cultural and literary questions, knowing, of course, your approach to cultural problems fully involves your entire political position. As you remember, we suggested several subjects in our first

letter. In case you wish to write on other subjects, do not hesitate to disregard our suggestions.

⁴³See appendix and Chapter II for more details about "The League."

⁴⁴Marguerite Bonnet, "André Breton and the Surrealist Movement," International Socialist Review 9 March 1975), p. 28, trans. from Bonnet's introduction to André Breton: Antologia (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1973).

⁴⁵Sept manifestes dada: Lampisteries (Paris: Jean-Jaques Pauvert, 1963), pp. 34-5.

⁴⁶(London: Pluto Press, 1978), p. 17. See also Robert Short, "Dada and Surrealism" in Modernism, edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarland (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976).

⁴⁷p. 23.

⁴⁸See Eddy Batache, Surréalisme et tradition: La Pensée d'André Breton jugée selon l'œuvre de René Guénon (Paris: Editions traditionnelles, 1978), pp. 100-103.

⁴⁹See appendix for Péret-Van Heijenoort correspondence (6977-6978).

⁵⁰André Breton, Manifestes du surréalisme (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), p. 49.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 54.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 38-9.

⁵³The Hungarian scholars István Csibra and István Szerdahelyi have used this term -- nihilistic anarchism -- to describe the Dadaist movement. See Eszttetikai ABC (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1978), p. 48. For Bonnet's comments on the poem, "Lâchez tout," see her André Breton (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1975), pp. 255-56.

⁵⁴See the version translated by Max Eastman, The Young Lenin (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972). The manuscript for this book at one time disappeared mysteriously from Eastman's study (1934). Just as mysteriously it reappeared at Houghton Library where someone had deposited it years later. The depositor is unnamed. See the preface for details.

⁵⁵La Révolution surréaliste (15 October 1925), p. 29.

⁵⁶Maurice Nadeau, The History of Surrealism (New York: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 120-1.

⁵⁷Éditions surréalistes, 1926. Anna Balakian calls this text "Breton's best analysis of the relationship of communism to surrealism." See André Breton: Magus of Surrealism (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 80.

⁵⁸Nadeau, p. 135.

⁵⁹"André Breton and the Surrealist Movement," p. 30.

⁶⁰For Nadeau's commentary on the letter, see p. 155. See also pp. 156-8.

⁶¹p. 157.

⁶²See appendix for the unpublished document. The published manifesto is included here in Chapter Three. It is reproduced from La Clé des champs (Paris: Union Générale, 1967), pp. 53-61. The shortened version of the slogan -- "Toute licence en art" -- appears in italics on p. 58.

⁶³Pierre Naville, L'Intellectuel communiste (Paris: Librairie Marcel Rivière, 1956).

⁶⁴Louis Aragon (New York: Twayne, 1971), p. 37.

⁶⁵pp. 37-8.

⁶⁶(Paris: Denoël et Steele, 1935), pp. 51-2.

⁶⁷Herbert Gershman, The Surrealist Revolution in France (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1969), pp. 147-8.

⁶⁸p. 148.

⁶⁹pp. 147-8.

⁷⁰André Thirion, Révolutionnaires sans révolution (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1972), pp. 302-3.

⁷¹pp. 302-3.

⁷²Entretiens (1913-1952) (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 166-7. For more details on the effects of the "Kharkov Affaire" on the West, see Edward Mozejko, Der Sozialistische Realismus: Theorie, Entwicklung und Versagen einer Literaturmethode (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1977), pp. 118-21.

⁷³Gershman, pp. 96-7.

⁷⁴Entretiens, p. 165.

⁷⁵Thirion, pp. 32-3.

⁷⁶L'Itinéraire d'Aragon (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), pp. 208-9. See also Michel Apel-Muller, "Présence d'Elsa," La Nouvelle critique 36 (September 1970): 38-43

⁷⁷p. 209

⁷⁸Quoted in Georges Sadoul, ed., Aragon, Poètes d'aujourd'hui: 159 (Paris: Pierre Seghers, 1967), pp. 118-9.

⁷⁹"French Poet Louis Aragon, 85," Toronto Star, 29 December 1982, sec. A, p. 12.

⁸⁰(Paris: Éditions surréalistes, 1930).

⁸¹André Breton (New York: Twayne, 1971), p. 19.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Schwarz, Arturo. André Breton, Trotsky et l'anarchie, trans. Amaryllis Vassilikioti (Paris: Union générale, 1974), p. 49.

⁸⁴New Left Review 108 (March-April 1978): 56.

From its first issue the magazine (Partisan Review) assumed the characteristics that would contribute to its rise as a culture center and an intellectual meeting ground for the discussion of politics and literature. Like the old Masses in 1912, it combined art and politics in a new and influential way; like the Seven Arts it pledged itself to an international community of intellectuals. But unlike its two predecessors, it was devoted to the rediscovery of a twentieth-century literature. It preached a new politics that rejected many assumptions of the 1930s but remained caught up in the language of that decade. When Clement Greenberg wrote of the two important factors that had contributed to a general little magazine renaissance in the early 1940s, his remarks were particularly apt for the Partisan Review. The decline of Stalinism and the influx of writers and artists from Europe had contributed to the stability of small magazines. Thus the moral collapse of Stalinism and the physical collapse of Europe promised to revive American writing.

James Burkhart Gilbert, Writers and Partisans, 1968.

It is often a source of wonder and consternation for the powers that preside over the great opinion-making organs of our society--in government, in culture and in the media--to discover that the views so fluently disseminated by their vast enterprises have had their origin, more often than not, in the ideas and controversies of obscure intellectual coteries that seemed, at the time of their emergence, to exist at a great distance from any sort of power or influence.

"Partisan Culture, Partisan Politics," in The New York Times Book Review (February 7, 1982)

CHAPTER TWO

CONTACTS BETWEEN TROTSKY AND NEW YORK'S PARTISAN REVIEW

On 7 July 1937, the correspondence between Leon Trotsky and the editors of Partisan began. As mentioned, Dwight Macdonald wrote to Trotsky in order to explain the basis on which the new Partisan Review will be founded. The letter is four paragraphs long, and the important words and lines are marked by Trotsky (see the copy of the original 2826 in Appendix A.) His first interest is in Macdonald's use of the word "independent" to describe the monthly; he puts a question mark in the margin, and underlines the word. Macdonald has said:

A group of writers in New York city are reviving the Partisan Review. We are going to publish it monthly as an independent Marxist journal. The emphasis will be on literature, philosophy, culture in general, rather than on economics or politics. (2826)

The rest of the letter is an invitation to Trotsky to write something for the journal along the lines of "revolutionary literature," perhaps a review of Silone's new novel, Bread and Wine, (London, 1936) (the original Italian version, Pane e Vino, was published only in 1937) or perhaps an analysis of the relation of "the Marxian dialectic to the theories of Freud." Trotsky underlines the due date for the article, October (1937), and one other sentence. Macdonald adds to the letter that he is "on the executive committee of the Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky." This, of course, is meant to signify Macdonald's political commitment to Trotsky, and, as a result, Trotsky will take his request seriously. Trotsky answers Macdonald eight days later:

Thank you very much for your friendly invitation. I would be very happy to collaborate in a genuine Marxist magazine pitilessly directed against the ideological poisons of both the Second and Third Internationals, poisons which are no less harmful in the sphere of culture, science and art than in the sphere of economics and politics. (8951)

But Trotsky cannot stop there. As he is wont to do, he tries to link Macdonald with his other supporters in the cultural world. His goal is to build a wing of the anti-Stalinist movement in North America and Europe. Trotsky explains that Diego Rivera and others of his friends have drafted "a programmatic declaration in favour of a revolutionary Marxist magazine, to be devoted, like your own, to questions of philosophy, science and art rather than to politics." He wisely "enclose(s) a copy of this statement" for Macdonald's perusal, and then quickly gets to his real point: It goes without saying that

the Partisan Review will also issue a programmatic declaration, and I would be very glad to see it, before its publication if possible. You call your review an "independent Marxist journal." I understand this qualification in the sense that the Partisan Review, at least in the period to come, will not enter into organizational dependence [Trotsky's emphasis] upon any political organization. This tendency can be understood in the present situation in the United States, as well as elsewhere. But the more important thing is the dependence of the magazine upon certain fundamental principles which, in the last analysis, cannot be separated from a general political orientation.

Trotsky's reservations are clear: he wants the journal to issue a programme that he can approve, before it is published; he explains that to be "independent" and "Marxist" at the same time is overly cautious and a contradiction in terms, and it must be clarified before he will endorse the new journal. But he is encouraging, and hopes that they can work out a relationship in the near future:

I will await more ample information from you about the character of your magazine, and I shall be happy if this preliminary exchange of opinion assures the possibility of systematic rather than episodic collaboration.

In order to convince his new audience, the exchange must be "systematic," and not much time can lapse between debates and harassments of one sort or another if Trotsky is going to sustain a high profile in the journal, and win that particular cultural milieu's support inside the Defense Committee. It is of prime political importance that left wing intellectuals circulate positive commentary about Trotsky and against the Soviet Union in the articles which they write. Moreover, it is clear that the United States Community Party represents the only consistent influence in the left intelligentsia, and Trotsky understands full well how important it is to provide a left-wing alternative to this influence inside that milieu. He continues the correspondence with PR, but not before instigating political debate within the editorial board.

As far as I am able to tell, there is no further exchange of letters until 23 August 1937 (2838). Macdonald writes to Trotsky because "we feel that we have not made ourselves clear in describing the nature of the magazine." He encloses a "circular" in order to clarify the political position of the magazine. The editorial board consists of: F.W. Dupee, Dwight Macdonald, Mary McCarthy, George L.K. Morris, William Phillips and Philip Rahv. Having not appeared for a year, PR will "resume publication in November, 1937, in new format and edited by a new board." PR will have "no commitments, either tacit or avowed, to any political party or group." "Revolutionary in point of view, cultural in content, the magazine will offer a critical appraisal of present day forces in literature and the arts." The circular carves out a political position for PR that separates it from both the right and the orthodox Communist left.

Its position will be free from the debasements that commercial cynicism on the one hand and political dogmatism on the other impose on American expression. Experimental and dissident, PARTISAN REVIEW will strive to advance values making for a more intensive consciousness and a greater understanding of artistic mediums in times

of conflict and transformation. To revive the integrity of the Left movement in culture means adopting a polemical attitude toward our contemporaries; and in being controversial the magazine will not restrict its contribution to suit its particular editorial tendency. (2838)

Macdonald's letter explains much more clearly what the problems in editorial policy are, and as such, he reveals his own best intentions and the magazine's confusion about its "politics" and its commitment to literature and American culture. He begins: "From our point of view, the magazine, being exclusively a cultural organ, with its main emphasis on creative literature and criticism, cannot take any specific position on questions of Marxist strategy in the fashion a political party or grouping does." We can sense in this letter the old contradiction between a socialist's commitment to art and his commitment to politics. Macdonald continues:

In this sense, we are ideological in character, rather than political. Furthermore, our conception of the relation of revolutionary literature to revolutionary politics is such that it excludes our taking part in immediate [Macdonald's emphasis] political controversies. As individuals, of course, the editors have a political life of their own and hold various beliefs concerning the present situation: all of us are opponents of Stalinism and committed to a Leninist program of action. We believe in the need for a new party to take the place of the corrupted Comintern. But as editors of a literary periodical we cannot impose such ideas on the literary contents, although our political ideas do shape -- in some ways -- our work as editors.

He goes on to explain this by creating a special niche for "revolutionary intellectuals" on the left, an anti-Stalinist intelligentsia:

We shall attack all forms of reformism, including Stalinism, insofar as these forces affect American culture (and literature, in particular). We seceded from Stalinism primarily because of its devastating influence on revolutionary culture; and it was the Stalinist antics with the intellectuals that first stirred us to examine critically their political line.

Macdonald then makes the important point that within the Left movement, Partisan Review will undoubtedly be associated with Trotsky and Trotskyism simply by virtue of the fact that both are so unpopularly "anti-Stalinist," and because both

hold some fairly liberal views about the nature of art and culture, and the role of censorship. The alliance is made:

In fact, even prior to the appearance of our first number, the New Masses gang is already describing us as stooges of the Fourth International. Although we think the description inaccurate, we are by no means ashamed or frightened by the connections they establish between your ideas and our magazine.

As soon as Partisan reveals that it is in support of Trotsky, Trotsky seizes the opportunity (11 September 1937) to continue the debate concerning its politics, and specifically, its "short program." Although he sincerely hopes for future collaboration, he is uncertain about the claims PR makes to being "independent."

He writes:

The short program of the PARTISAN REVIEW seems to me a bit too vague. The special blow against "political dogmatism," without any exactitude of definition, seems to me to be very unhappy. We must naturally reject every attempt at commanding the literary, art and science fields from a political point of view. But the average philistine understands by "political dogmatism," not intervention by the bureaucracy in the sphere of painting, poetry, etc., but a definite political program, even very serious political thinking. Especially in America, Marxists have to fight against political nonchalance, ideological confusion, trivial empiricism, and not against dogmatism. This formula is not correct even concerning the Stalinists: they haven't any dogma at all. In essence, they are characterized by political servilism and not by ideological dogmatism. The danger with your evasive formulation is that you will not satisfy empiricists concerned with safeguarding their "independence" and at the same time you will repulse revolutionary Marxists who are called dogmatists. (8952)

For these reasons Trotsky decides to wait and see how PR develops before committing himself to the journal on a regular basis.

The real debates between Trotsky and the editors of PR take place in 1938. During the transition from 1937 to 1938 political battles raged, and not any less for the magazine than for Trotsky. The headlines of the first issue of the new PR in December of 1937 carried the names of James T. Farrell, Edmund Wilson, Pablo Picasso, Sidney Hook and Dwight Macdonald.

Farrell's contribution was twofold: an excerpt from his new novel, No Star is Lost, and his "Socialist Call" column. This "Call" was especially important because it seemed to polarize the little magazines in New York. The New Masses had declared that Rahv and Phillips had "stolen" PR from its rightful owners. Farrell uses the column in order to stimulate the debate; it is only now when the irate Communists have left PR that he can participate in the journal in good faith. The New Masses in turn continued its polemics against Farrell, the Dewey Commission, and its supporters well into 1938, printing satiric poems and essays which mocked everyone from John Dewey to leading members of the Trotskyist movement. 1938 also saw the formation of the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism (see Appendix B for details about members), the main accomplishment of which was to give strength to those writers of PR and other anti-Stalinist writers -- James Burnham, Sherry Mangan, George Novack, John Wheelwright -- against the staid C.P. led cultural organs and organizations. A viable anti-Stalinist left-leaning cultural milieu crystallized around Trotsky, and he, himself, was forced to evaluate and criticize League members through correspondence.

Riding on the wave of the polemics and the debates, the editors of PR write to Trotsky on 14 January 1938, asking him to contribute to a symposium on "What is Living and What is Dead in Marxism?" (3714). It is clear that they want to begin to pose a clear intellectual and theoretical alternative to the Granville Hicks and even the Lillian Hellmans of the left liberal magazine community (Hellman -- author of the now popular The Children's Hour, 1934, The Little Foxes, 1939, and An Unfinished Woman, 1969 -- had signed a letter along with 88 other writers, editors and artists in New Masses, warning "liberal members of the Trotsky Defense Committee that they were being used" by Trotskyite forces). Other prominent intellectuals in New York simply needed emotional support, so they

would be better able to resist growing political and social pressures in the city. Ferdinand Lundberg, author of America's Sixty Families, was, according to Alan Wald, "subject to harassment because of his endorsement of the Committee." Apparently James T. Farrell had to continually "work on him" in order "to strengthen his resistance to pressures to drop off the Committee."¹

On January 20, 1938, Trotsky responds to Dwight Macdonald in a long letter -- one of the few to have been published (first in Fourth International, March/April 1950, and then in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art.) His doubts about PR and its editors' convictions are unabashedly clear: "it is my general impression that the editors of Partisan Review are capable, educated and intelligent people but they have nothing to say." Trotsky suspects that the Symposium in which he has been invited to participate is a sham. He thinks the title is pretentious, and the objectives confused. He is afraid that PR is more concerned with respectability than with doing serious political or cultural battle. He says:

"A world war is approaching. The inner political struggle in all countries tends to become transformed into civil war. Currents of the highest tension are active in all fields of culture and ideology. You evidently wish to create a small cultural monastery, guarding itself from the outside world by skepticism, agnosticism and respectability."²

Trotsky's words are harsh, to say the least, but his honesty is appreciated by Partisan Review's editors. In spite of what his political enemies might interpret as a "sectarian tone," Trotsky invites further exchange with PR. The invitation is attractive to them, and they accept his challenge to justify themselves in the continuing correspondence.

Philip Rahv responds to Trotsky's indictments of Partisan Review on behalf of the editors in a letter dated 1 March 1938 (4211), just two weeks after Leon Sedov's death. It is interesting to note that at the bottom of the first page of this 5-page letter Trotsky has handwritten: "Ich gestehe" (I confess), the name of a novel by

German ex-prisoner of the G.P.U., Wolf Weiss. (Between this letter and Trotsky's equally long response, Trotsky writes a letter of thanks to PR's editors for sending condolences. Some kind of personal understanding has been reached between them. (The letter (9764) is included in Appendix A.)

In the March 1 letter, Philip Rahv gladly takes Trotsky on. He begins by flattering Trotsky: "your letter raises questions which go to the heart of our editorial problems." Rahv explains that "the magazine's uncertain line" is at least in part due to the "uncertainty" of the cultural and political situation in North America at that time. He points to some rather serious "adverse conditions":

. . . the isolation of the magazine from the main body of radical intellectuals, and the unprecedented character of our project in the sense that it is the first anti-Stalinist left literary journal in the world, encumbered with a Stalinist past and subject to the tremendous pressure of the American environment towards disorientation and compromise... (4211)

He writes that it makes perfectly good sense to be cautious in the first few issues, given this background. In order to "appear sane, balanced and (alas) respectable," the magazine has dealt "gingerly" with issues which "require a bold and positive approach."

However, these are "errors of tone," and not "errors of ideological faith." They are not to be blown out of proportion. Moreover, Trotsky's letter reveals him as an unfair critic who has not considered the context in which PR must develop. His standpoint is "ultimatist," a word which Trotsky has underlined in the letter. In Marxist political jargon "ultimatist" is insulting. It infers a lack of intellectual flexibility -- a position which Trotsky cannot afford to assume. Further to this, Rahv says Trotsky has wrongly judged PR on the basis of its first two issues, thus leaving no room for change. But the most lucid criticism of Trotsky's wrong headed "attitude" toward the new magazine is summed up in the third

paragraph of his letter; the one which addresses itself to literature and culture, and the reappearing problem of the Marxist's relationship to literature and culture:

It is much easier to designate a clear-cut program for a purely ideological organ. In literature, however, -- even under favorable circumstances, when an ascendent and unified revolutionary movement inspires the intellectual with militancy and self-confidence -- the problem of finding the precise relation between the political and imaginative, the problem of discovering the kind of editorial modulation that will do damage to neither; is so difficult as to exclude any simple and instantaneous solution (Trotsky's emphasis).

Rahv says that initially a new political-cultural publication must gently lay the political groundwork for a fairly naive literary audience. These "relatively primitive tasks are already behind us." Now the real work must begin: "Our plan is to re-orient the magazine, to stiffen its political spine." If Trotsky were truly committed to the magazine, and to helping to build a new left intelligentsia, he would do his best to support it -- both verbally and with articles. On this score Rahv explains that high quality non-revolutionary literature will and must be published in PR, in order to intelligently counter "the pseudo-radical shouting" one finds in "other left-wing periodicals."

He continues to say, however, that "an alliance with 'intelligence' per se opens no prospects to the magazine." And in this connection he maintains that Trotsky's influence would have been invaluable:

... your attitude to us has been far from encouraging. You must realize that contributions from you would affect the character of the magazine in a drastic way and lift its morale. Instead -- and you have done this in the magazine's most formative and crucial period -- you have shrugged your shoulders, content to issue criticisms that expose the weak sides of the enterprise. Such criticisms are helpful; your active participation, however, in solving our problems would be much more to the point.

In order to generate cultural debate on the anti-Stalinist left, PR has chosen to present to its readers a symposium on Marxism, the symposium to which Trotsky objects. As Rahv says, the symposium is a way of starting "all over again."

Despite Trotsky's worries, however, "to re-evaluate the Marxist-Leninist tradition is not necessarily to 'revise' it."

Trotsky's "worries" do subside for a while, but they reemerge in the correspondence to follow to such a degree that we can say this particular fluctuation is a trend in the "restricted" correspondence. For all his virtues, and his knowledge of literature and history, Trotsky is first and foremost a political man. Politics, in the end, dominates his thought. His March 21, 1938 response to Philip Rahv reveals this most poignantly (9765).

Trotsky suggests a longer courtship between him and Rahv even though he is obviously enthusiastic about their new rapprochement. He is not going to make any commitments to PR until he has seen the much talked about "programmatic declaration," expected to be published in the April issue of PR. Until then, he has several comments to make, on eleven different subjects.

- 1) A notion of "independence" in the face of "the demoralizing influence of Stalinism," is impossible to maintain.
- 2) There is a need to discredit the New Masses, "this filthy pail of Stalinism" in a style which all readers can understand.
- 3) Partisan Review must also destroy the influence of liberal publications, such as Nation and New Republic, on "radical thought."
- 4) Partisan Review does not need to be "a purely political journal" in order to counter the "terrible poison" of "proletarian humanism" in culture.
- 5) Only bold and aggressive policy will win the respect of left intellectuals to Partisan Review's goals.
- 6) PR should forget about "the older generation of radical intellectuals" because they have been "poisoned by Louis Fischerism." (Louis Fischer was a leading American journalist in Moscow during the thirties. He did not support the Trotsky Defense Committee, for example, and could not be called an opponent of Stalin, or of the Moscow Trials. Trotsky would consider him dishonest, if not an apologist.) It would be best if PR would "become the organ of the youth."

- 7) Youth will meet with the working class as history brings them closer together, and then "the intellectuals (can) fructify the new workers' movement" -- if they are adequately prepared.
- 8) "Ultimatism" is not so absurd, because, after all, every political programme is an "ultimatum" in the true sense of the word.
- 9) The real commonality between PR and Trotsky lies in a dialectical theory of art and history; flexibility, yet a firm "historical conception."

Here Trotsky takes the opportunity to present his "aesthetics," his theory on the nature of art. Because such opinions are not common in the correspondence, I include the passage in its entirety:

If there is at present in America a young and promising movement in art the Partisan Review can, to a certain degree, tie its fate to this movement. It is possible however that there is no such vital movement. One can hope that it will appear as a result of the deep crisis through which the country is passing. But no one has yet been successful in artificially manufacturing such an art current. "Marxist esthetics" has no recipes and prescriptions for this--and cannot have them. Marxism was the first to show what place technique occupies in the development of mankind; however, this does not mean that a Marxist magazine can substitute for a Patent Bureau in technical inventions. The new generation of poets, artists, and so forth can expect from the Partisan Review not ready-made esthetic recipes but a clearing of the paths for new art forms through a struggle against routine, false authorities, ossified formulas, and first of all against convention and falsehood. In the sphere of esthetic schools and methods the Partisan Review, it seems to me, will be constrained to observe in a certain sense a critical "eclecticism" (yes . . . eclecticism). It is necessary to give new tendencies an opportunity to appear. Likewise it is impossible to ignore purely formal quests and experiments. Here breadth of approach and pedagogical flexibility upon a stable basic historical conception is very important. I believe that in this respect there are no differences between us.³

- 10) The individuals that PR has invited to participate in its Symposium are questionable, either as Marxists, or as capable theorists. Victor Serge, for example, "is a talented writer," but "he is not at all a theorist."
- 11) Trotsky tells Rahv about the manuscript of Wolf Weiss' novel, I Confess, and suggests that the Mexican painter, Diego Rivera, might illustrate the novel with 25 plates; does PR know of a good translator of German?⁴

It is clear that the correspondence between the editors of Partisan Review and Leon Trotsky had slowly lead up to an intensification and clarification of Trotsky's ideas on art, literature and culture, evidenced in part by his continued work in the area. It seems that, especially in 1935, when he was often ill, he read novels (presumably because he could not work). His diary of 1935 records his impressions of these novels, and attests to his interest in modern literature. For example, on April 5, he says: "I have been unwell, after two weeks of intensive work, and have read several novels." About Clarisse et sa fille by Marcell Prévost, he says: "The novel is highly virtuous, but it is the virtue of an old cocotté." He mentions a Russian novel, "Kolkhida by Paustovsky": Kolkhida was written in 1934; realistic and socialistic, it views man and nature within the framework of socialist reconstruction. He also mentions "a pure specimen of what is called 'proletarian literature'," The Great Assembly Line by Yakov Ilyin. Trotsky has a lot to say about Ilyin's novel, a novel which reflects the popular view of either Stalin or "The Opposition."⁵ Those who posited that Trotsky had an "aesthetics" would be obliged to consider the above letters, and the public addresses and articles which followed. During the summer of 1938, for example, Trotsky's ideas on aesthetics were presented in three such important published essays or addresses. They are: "Revolutionary Art and the Fourth International;" "A Letter to the Editors of Partisan Review;" and, the "Manifesto" of F.I.A.R.I., which, among the Americans, became the L.C.F.S., the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism.⁶

The first document appeared in French on 1 June 1938 and was delivered to the founding conference of the Fourth International. "Revolutionary Art and the Fourth International," presented in absentia, describes the betrayal of the working class by orthodox communism, and the ensuing "crisis of all human culture, including that of art." It speaks also of "the present unresolved crisis of

capitalism." The solution is "a new upsurge of the revolutionary movement," because only this can "enrich art with new perspectives." Trotsky gets very personal in the speech, especially when he wants to "cast a glance at the historic mission of the Fourth International."⁷ He says he can only do so -- and this is reminiscent of things he had said in his autobiography, My Life, written in 1930 -- "with the eyes of a proletarian revolutionist" and with the "eyes of the artist which I am by profession." He continues:

I have never separated these two spheres of my activity. My pen has never served me as a toy for my personal diversion I have always forced myself to depict the sufferings, hopes, and struggles of the working classes because that is how I approach life, and therefore art, which is an inseparable part of it.⁸

The second more discursive essay appeared on 18 June 1938, in the pages of Partisan Review. This was presented in the form of a "letter" (pp. 3-10) entitled "Art and Politics: A letter to the editors of Partisan Review," though Trotsky's secretary, Sara Lewis, referred to it as "Trotsky's article on 'Art and Revolution'" (12195).⁹ This "letter" is the direct product of the correspondence between Trotsky and Rahv, and serves to explicate certain ideas and maxims regarding the nature of art, the role of the left intelligentsia in transmitting culture, and the role of artists in the liberation of humankind. The letter concludes, as does the aforementioned address, that the "first condition" of "regeneration is the overthrow of the domination of the Kremlin bureaucracy."

The importance of art and culture at this period in Trotsky's life is attested to by the introductory paragraph of the letter, in which he modestly admits that he is not well-prepared for the task of presenting "views on the state of present-day arts and letters." He does so therefore "not without some hesitation." Trotsky says that he has not really dealt with this particular area since his "book Literature and Revolution (1924-25)."

I have not once returned to the problem of artistic creation and only occasionally have I been able to follow the latest developments in this sphere. I am far from pretending to offer an exhaustive reply. The task of this letter is to correctly pose the question.¹⁰

The letter-essay is directed toward the theoretical and historical implications of the socialist's determination of the relationship between art and politics, or, the party.

The third document is not signed by Trotsky, but all informations to date would lead us to believe that it is, in fact, his brainchild. The idea for F.I.A.R.I. came up during polite conversation in April, 1938, in Trotsky's study in his house in Coyoacan, Mexico. Present were André and Jacqueline Breton, Natalia (Trotsky's second wife), and Jean Van Heijenoort, Trotsky's secretary. Eventually "talk turned to the relations between art and politics."

Trotsky posed the idea of an international federation of revolutionary artists and writers, to counterbalance the Stalinist organizations. It was clear that he had held such a plan in mind since hearing about Breton's anticipated trip to Mexico. The prospect of a manifesto was mentioned. Breton agreed to submit a draft.¹¹

F.I.A.R.I., *Fédération internationale d'art révolutionnaire et indépendante*, was Trotsky's answer to a "permanent revolution" of the arts. Jean van Heijenoort attests that Trotsky was responsible for writing a good part of the Manifesto which Partisan Review was destined to publish in the final issue of 1938. Van Heijenoort recalls the situation:

From the blind alley that the manifesto had become, a way out was finally found. If I remember correctly, Breton took the first step. He gave Trotsky a few sheets of paper, covered with his tiny handwriting. Trotsky dictated a few pages in Russian, to be combined with Breton's text. I translated Trotsky's pages into French and then showed them to Breton. After more talk, Trotsky took all of the texts, cut them, added a few passages, and pasted everything into a long roll. I typed the resulting text in French, translating Trotsky's Russian and keeping Breton's prose. This was the text on which they reached final agreement.¹²

Moreover, van Heijenoort suggests that it is easy to tell who wrote which parts:

Whoever reads it can, from the language, unerringly recognize the paragraphs written by Trotsky and those written by Breton. Trotsky wrote a bit less than half the text, Breton a bit more. Directed to artists, the manifesto was published over the signatures of Breton and [Diego] Rivera, although Rivera had taken no part in its writing. The manifesto called for the creation of an International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Artists. It was translated into several languages and became well known.¹³

The text is reproduced in two versions in Chapter Three.

Trotsky must have had this project in mind for a long time because he began preparations early in 1938. The summer letters foreshadow what was to come, though at the time the editors of Partisan were probably not aware of the ramifications. On 12 May 1938, Trotsky rather awkwardly introduces André Breton to Mr. Rahv:

André Breton, the recognized head of Surrealism [sic] is now in Mexico. As you know surely, he is artistically and politically not only independent from the Stalinists but absolutely hostile to them. He had sincere sympathies for the Fourth International. He heard from me with great interest about Partisan Review. I asked him, naturally in a purely hypothetical form, if he would be willing to establish contact with your magazine. He answered with full readiness. He published here in a weekly a short article on the present French literature and opened a series of lectures in the university upon the same topic. If you are interested in his collaboration you can write him at my address or in care of Diego Rivera (9767).

One day after his address on "Revolutionary Art and the Fourth International," Trotsky writes to Rahv again:

... It is good that you entered into correspondence with Mr. Breton, who is not only a highly qualified author and lecturer but also a very honest and courageous man (9768).

On 21 June 1938, he writes another short letter to Rahv in which he focusses on four "cultural" topics, all of which have been discussed in and connected by his own article on "Art and Revolution" (or, the Letter to Partisan). The four foci are: Breton (and the French surrealists); Rivera (and the Mexican muralists and surrealists); official Soviet art; and, the American non-Stalinist left (Partisan Review). Political ties have been forged on the basis of art and its criticisms:

... Breton is very anxious to have this article ("Art and Revolution") exclusively for his French publication "Minotaur" for a special issue devoted to the paintings of Diego Rivera on one side and official Soviet paintings on the other. I couldn't of course give him the article already sent to you and he didn't insist after my explanation of the situation. But if you are willing yourself to cede him the article or if you find it not fit for your review please communicate with me immediately because Breton leaves Mexico at the end of this month (9769).

Finally, in the most detailed letter to Rahv, Trotsky outlines the politics of their interconnectedness. He says:

I believe for my part that the creation of FIARI (see manifesto) will open the possibility of a more systematic collaboration among us without binding any of the camps by organizational obligations towards the others and without limiting their mutual independence (9770).

He proclaims that "Partisan Review has here, it seems to me, an excellent opportunity to use this document [the Manifesto] for an important step forward."

He continues: "It is high time to pass from a general and a bit vague criticism to a more precise and organizational initiative." The Manifesto and its realization in F.I.A.R.I. represent that initiative.

Dwight Macdonald replies to Trotsky's letter on 16 August 1938 (2840) on behalf of the editorial board of Partisan Review. They are in favour of the project; the letter reads:

Dear Comrade Trotsky,

Rahv, Dupee, and myself of the editorial board of PARTISAN REVIEW have now read the FIARI manifesto which you were kind enough to transmit to us from Rivera and Breton. We agree with its main points, we think it is an excellent manifesto, and wish to add our names to it, also the name of PARTISAN REVIEW. Two other editors - Phillips and Morris - are out of town and have not yet read the manifesto. However, I think I can safely promise you that we will print the manifesto in our next issue. Since we are changing our publishing frequency from monthly to quarterly, this will not appear until November.

As to your five conditions: (1) I will undertake the translation myself, with the aid of my wife; (2) we will publish the manifesto in our next issue, and also - unless it seems too expensive - as a leaflet; (3) I have taken up the question of signatures; (4) we will do our best to give

the manifesto wide circulation; (5) I shall write at once to Rivera and Breton.

There is great need for a group like the projected FIARI. We of PARTISAN REVIEW will do all in our power to promote it in the United States.

Sincerely,

Dwight Macdonald

May I say that I thought your letter to PARTISAN REVIEW a document of the first importance; thank you for sending it - hope you like the translation by my wife and myself.

Some time later, perhaps early in 1939,¹⁴ Dwight Macdonald sends Trotsky a copy of the American Manifesto of the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism. A list of members is included: V.F. Calverton, James T. Farrell, artist George L.K. Morris, poet Kenneth Patchen, Harold Rosenberg, Meyer Schapiro, John Wheelwright, and others. He attaches a letter which outlines the relationship of the League to F.I.A.R.I.:

... We have as yet taken no action on possible affiliation to the FIARI. We are, as the Manifesto states, in general sympathy with FIARI and its founders (2847).

Macdonald also explains that the Manifesto has received some publicity. "This manifesto has been sent out widely to the liberal and labor press. . . . It was also distributed at the recent Third American Writers Congress." Reaction to the League has also begun among communists and left liberal thinkers: "The current New Republic has a scornful paragraph on the League." This kind of reaction, of course, is countered by the "positive press" we find in Partisan Review in 1938 and 1939. On 7 October 1938 Sean Niall's article/letter entitled "Paris Letter" praises certain contemporary surrealist works -- Benjamin Peret's Je ne mange pas de ce pain-là et Au paradis des fantômes, George Hugnet's Une Écriture lisible, -- and the "launching, by André Breton and Diego Rivera, of the FIARI . . . a

rallying-point for those artists who have of late grown more and more uncomfortable in the increasingly smelly Stalinist ambience, especially since Nizan's sharp attack in Commune on Friedman's intendedly panegyric De la sainte Russie à l'U.R.S.S."¹⁵ Later, in the same issue, the editors of Partisan Review responded to a critique of their policies by Malcolm Cowley, the editor of New Republic. Cowley had denounced Partisan Review because it was not pro-Soviet, but he did so by accusing it of underhanded politics, and "second-hand" publications of stories and poetry. The debate continues along the same lines: the editor's defence is simply that they see the Communist Party as a "major threat to both literature and revolution in our time," and that they are determined to fight against its influence.¹⁶

A comparison of the two Manifestoes would be useful here. How were they different? What do the Americans emphasize? And what do Breton and Rivera (and Trotsky) highlight? How are they similar? Certainly both manifestoes talk about "reaction" in America and in the Soviet Union, and about fascism in Italy and Germany. Because political forces are encroaching on humanity, they say, culture is debased, restricted and, in some cases, denied. Though the Breton-Rivera document is more passionate and metaphorical -- almost hyperbolic -- the two documents begin by stating similar hypotheses: "Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art" begins this way:

We can say without exaggeration that never has civilization been menaced so seriously as today. The Vandals, with instruments which were barbarous, and so comparatively ineffective, blotted out the culture of antiquity in one corner of Europe. But today we see world civilization, united in its historic destiny, reeling under the blows of reactionary forces armed with the entire arsenal of modern technology. We are by no means thinking only of the world war that draws near. Even in times of "peace," the position of art and science has become absolutely intolerable.

It continues:

In the contemporary world we must recognize the ever more widespread destruction of those conditions under which intellectual creation is possible. From this follows of necessity an increasingly manifest degradation not only of the work of art but also of the specifically "artistic" personality. The regime of Hitler, now that it has rid Germany of all those artists whose work expressed the slightest sympathy for liberty, however superficial, has reduced those who still consent to take up pen or brush to the status of domestic servants of the regime, whose task it is to glorify it on order, according to the worst possible esthetic conventions. If reports may be believed, it is the same in the Soviet Union, where Thermidorean reaction is now reaching its climax.

And later:

... the opposition of writers and artists is one of the forces which can usefully contribute to the discrediting and overthrow of regimes which are destroying [culture], along with the right of the proletariat to aspire to a better world,...

The "Statement to American Writers and Artists" begins in a fashion similar to the Breton-Rivera Manifesto: "We address this statement to all artists and writers who are concerned about the present drift of the United States to reaction and war." Unlike the Manifesto, it leaps immediately to the consequences such a "drift" has on culture. "Not in this country alone but everywhere, culture is threatened by advancing reaction (sic)." The "Statement . . ." points to the effects of fascism in the West, and Soviet politics in the East.

In forcing the recrudescence of social forms which had seemed obsolete, German and Italian fascism have at the same time compelled the revival of obsolete modes in art and science. In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, where nationalism and personal dictatorship are replacing the revolutionary ideals of freedom and democracy, culture suffers regimentation and debasement no less severe (p. 125).

Having pointed to the evils of other nations, the "Statement . . ." then addresses American "social reaction," and its effect on the arts:

Increasingly, experimentation is discouraged in the creative arts; a premium is put upon the conventional and the academic. The social sciences are witnessing the revival of various forms of obscurantism, the rise of an intolerant orthodoxy. Educators are being intimidated through loyalty oaths. Government censorship cripples W.P.A. [Works Progress Administration, 1935; or, in 1939, Work Projects

Administration] theatre, art and literary projects. Terrorism is exercised by the Catholic Church over such cultural enterprises as the movies (p. 125).

The conclusion? "Such conditions are a challenge to independent intellectuals." Moreover, "the intellectual gains of recent decades are rapidly being wiped out." A significant number of intellectuals, says the document, are "deserting their hard-won critical independence." They are learning to acquiesce, to tolerate injustice and "increasing tyranny," both at home and in "other democracies." Communists, like the social reformers, wrongly advocate war in order to achieve democracy. The document goes so far as to say that the so-called cultural organizations of the Communist Party are "the most active forces of reaction" in the United States today. The League protests their negative influence on artists and writers in their milieu: "they outlaw all dissenting opinion from the Left." Neither Soviet communism, nor industrial capitalism are capable of freeing humanity or culture.

What is the answer, then? The Statement makes it quite clear that "the idea of democracy must come to flower in a socialist democracy" which has been faithful to its ideals and its principles. The concepts of "principled" socialism and "artistic freedom" are central to both this Statement and the Breton-Rivera Manifesto. The following paragraph reads much the same in the Manifesto:

The defense of intellectual freedom requires, moreover, that we reject all theories and practices which tend to make culture the creature of politics, even revolutionary politics. We demand COMPLETE FREEDOM FOR ART AND SCIENCE, NO DICTATION BY PARTY OR GOVERNMENT. Culture not only does not seek orders but by its very nature cannot tolerate them. Truly intellectual creation is incompatible with the spirit of conformity; and if art and science are to be true to the revolution, they must first be true to themselves (p. 127).

In order to give more credence to this particular variety of left cultural thought, the Statement concluded with mention of André Breton and Diego Rivera: "movements inspired by their Manifesto (F.I.A.R.I.) have already appeared in

France, England and elsewhere." Finally, however, the Statement describes the function of the organization for which it speaks: "The function . . . will be to give publicity to our aims, to provide a forum for cultural discussion, and to campaign against all reactionary tendencies in intellectual life wherever they arise." The League's members are then listed, many of which are prominent critics and writers, and many of whom corresponded with Trotsky in the last years of his life (marked with an asterisk).^{*} Details about these people are given in Appendix B.

Lionel Abel	Dwight Macdonald [*]	Philip Rahv [*]
James Burnham [*]	John McDonald [*]	James Rorty [*]
V.F. Calverton [*]	Charles Malamuth [*]	Harold Rosenberg
Eleanor Clark	Sherry Mangan [*]	Paul Rosenfeld
David C. DeJong	Clark Mills	Harry Roskolenko
F.W. Dupee [*]	George L.K. Morris [*]	Meyer Schapiro [*]
James T. Farrell [*]	Helen Neville	Delmore Schwartz [*]
Clement Greenberg	George Novack [*]	Winfield T. Scott
William Gruen	Lyman Paine	Parker Tyler
Melvin J. Lasky	Kenneth Patchen [*]	John Wheelwright [*]
James Laughlin IV	William Philips [*]	Bertram D. Wolfe
	Fairfield Porter	

Because the Manifesto was distributed at the Third American Writers' Congress -- a meeting which Farrell and others continually referred to as undemocratic¹⁷ -- it is useful to take a look at the correspondence from Florence Becker, a relatively unknown left writer, to Leon Trotsky, dated 4 June 1939 (289). Feelings ran high at this particular congress, and Becker's letter to Trotsky along with her proposed resolution to the League, and her response to her forced resignation from the League of American Writers, attest to the debate which was brewing in the League, at the Congress, and in their circles.¹⁸ Partisan Review, of course, is a good monitor of the debate, too, and best indicates the sides of the arguments, and who was on which side. Though Becker was never published in the magazine, her views would have been welcomed there. Her letter to Trotsky explains the situation.

The League of American Writers is at this moment in its third biennial congress--the only time at which the membership has anything to say about League policies. I was admitted to the League about a year and a half ago, presumably because since my writings are mostly poetry and not very widely known, the membership committee did not know my exact affiliations. The other two co-signers have jobs that require them to use names other than their own, but they are not members either of the League or of the League for Culture and Socialism, which I also joined, simply because it seems better to hang together than separately.

Apparently Becker was asked to resign from the League because she circulated "the enclosed mimeographed document outside Carnegie Hall during a meeting of the League, without having first tried to present [her] position within the League." She had presented it to a Resolutions Committee. She was also guilty of "having signed the application to the League while disagreeing with one of its major tenets, the "People's Front"." It is clear from Becker's comments that political concerns dominate her thoughts:

The structure of the League is that of all Stalinist-controlled cultural organizations. The membership attends "educational" meetings and hears speeches. . . . The membership then votes Yes, and the meeting is over. It seemed to me a sheer waste of effort to try to penetrate these legalistic jungles with ideas not acceptable to the leadership, so I cut the Gordian knot.

It is clear that Becker would like to feel a kindred spirit with Trotsky because of her experience in the League. She even likens the League's treatment of her to a "Moscow trial." In her last paragraph she articulates her deepest sentiments about Trotsky's ideas, and their value among American writers. She says:

I can never tell you how much of your work has become incorporated into my life and thinking. All our generation of writers, needless to say, has been profoundly influenced by "Literature and Revolution." We who drafted this mimeographed document like to think it is descended both from "Literature and Revolution" and "State and Revolution," however imperfectly it may mirror its ancestors.¹⁹

Becker's document is certainly one of the first public statements among the New York intellectual circles which identifies Soviet communism with American

capitalism: it maintains that both undermine the efforts of writers and workers to liberate themselves. "Writers have the same stakes in the future as workers. They have the same to gain -- and nothing to lose but their chains" (289).

The League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism then, was the perfect organization for people like Becker. The fact of its existence helped to delineate the various positions in the left-wing community, though feelings continued to run high. The New Republic adequately represented the views of those who resisted the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism, and specifically those members and fellow travellers who despite their left-wing position on art and culture refused to lend support to the Soviet Union. In this way New Republic and magazines like it (Nation, New Statesman) became the quietly "pro-Moscow" publications that Trotsky and others expected them to be. Though not overtly hostile, New Republic, for example, dismisses the League through tone and word in its June 29, 1939 issue. The editorial in this particular issue gives a good idea of the context in which the League, Partisan Review and their friends had to work. The more "distance" a writer, artist or philosopher (like John Dewey) kept from the major institutions -- such as Trotsky himself, the League, or Partisan -- the less likely he was to be chastised or isolated by the little magazines which might support the Soviet Union or its policies. The debate about the Marxist's commitment to culture really was a political debate, and one which had great consequences for both communities.

The editorial in question is entitled: "Still Another Committee." It introduces the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism, and briefly ties it to its precursor, the Committee for Cultural Freedom. The third and final paragraph of the short piece goes right to its point, and does not comment on questions of art and culture at all. Whether or not the League has something to do with the "anti-Moscow communists" is important to the editors of the New Republic. It reads:

Commenting two weeks ago on the Committee for Cultural Freedom, we said that "some of its members are widely supposed to be followers of the anti-libertarian Trotsky." Dr. John Dewey in his letter on page 161 of this issue observes, "I will explicitly state there is no 'Trotskyist' among the signers." Persons who follow the practically incessant divisions and redivisions among sectarians on the left tell us Dr. Dewey is correct, that a crack has appeared in the ranks of the anti-Moscow communists and that the League now represents that part of the group which has stuck to its guns. We pass along this report with diffidence, however, since keeping track of Left politics is a wholetime job by itself, and we have other things to do (June 14, 1939, New Republic, p. 144).

To give an indication of just how seriously the League took such comments, Ferdinand Lundberg, Secretary of the League at the time, responds to the editorial with a long and sober letter.²⁰ Lundberg addresses himself to the key question: consistency of political position at home and abroad. He introduces the question by first asking if the League is just another committee, "WHY IS THE NEW REPUBLIC (AND OTHERS) SO CONCERNED ABOUT IT?" (emphasis theirs).

Lundberg hypothesizes then:

Does not the statement of the Committee arouse consternation because it makes it quite evident that it is the activities of the agents of totalitarianism HERE IN THIS COUNTRY that are going to be held up for public scrutiny? (The New Republic, June 28, 1939, pp. 217-18).

The letter continues:

How can one, I ask in all earnestness, logically criticize the Memorial Day slaughter of Republic Steel Company workers in Chicago, in which a few poor devils lost their lives, and at the same time apologize for the slaughter of five to ten million Russian peasants in the forced collectivization of Russian agriculture and for the condemnation of thousands of political leaders and savants in trials that were frame-ups? How can one condemn the trials of Sacco and Vanzetti, and the Scottsboro boys and at the same time rationalize the infinitely clearer frame-ups of the Moscow trials? . . . How can one condemn the Reichstag fire trials and not the Moscow trials? What has The New Republic to say about the assassination in France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland in the past five years of more than a dozen persons who have broken with the Soviet regime?

Does the New Republic want it to be understood that it has one standard for evaluating our own domestic reactionaries and another for estimating the activities of the Stalin dictatorship both in Russia and,

through its agents, here? In promoting such an impression does The New Republic wish to continue ignoring the vast and growing documented bibliography of the retrogressive character of the Stalin dictatorship? These are questions that arise forcefully upon reading The New Republic's attack upon the Committee for Cultural Freedom.

Lundberg then points to the final paragraph of the New Republic's editorial.

He says,

The final sentence in your paragraph is really too disingenuous, as The New Republic is itself deeply immersed on one side of its policies in Left politics of the Stalinist variety (and was playing Stalinist politics in its attack on this anti-Stalinist, anti-Hitler and anti-Trotsky Committee for Cultural Freedom) while on the other side of its policies it is immersed in New Deal politics. To be sure, I cannot prove what the editors of The New Republic know in their own minds, but I believe--and I suspect correctly--that The New Republic understands every little eddy of politics on the Left. I know that at least one of its editors attends to nothing else.

In conclusion, however, he hopes that the editors of the magazine will realize that the defense of American liberalism does not rest on the continued defense of "Stalinism." He writes:

I sincerely hope, however, that once the serious implications of its stand are fully realized by the editors that The New Republic will undergo a change in its belief that it is necessary to defend Stalinism in order to defend American liberalism. The two are incompatible to the ninth degree (Ferdinand Lundberg, Secretary, Committee for Cultural Freedom).

It is interesting that the formation of this group of cultural workers, modelled after the FIARI, has caused such a raucous debate. New Republic's editors respond to Lundberg's letter, and spend five of seven paragraphs explaining why they are not Stalinists. Nothing is said about the raison d'être of the League (or the entire argument) -- art and culture. This attests to the significance of the political issue at the time, and the degree to which it affected literary debate in New York in the thirties.²¹ No less, however, did it affect the Surrealist movement in France. The Surrealist movement broke up into warring factions, determined by the same political alliances we have found in New York. Either the

Surrealists would follow André Breton, who corresponded with both Partisan Review and Trotsky, or they would follow Louis Aragon, and maintain ties with the French Communist Party and the U.S.S.R. The next chapter details the Trotsky-Breton correspondence, and the parallel effect it had on French intellectuals, writers and painters who came under Breton's influence.

Notes

¹James T. Farrell, p. 67.

²Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art, ed. Paul N. Siegel (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p. 103. This is quoted from one of the few published letters in the Trotsky-Partisan Review correspondence. Perhaps Pathfinder enjoyed Trotsky's attitude toward the editors, his crotchety style, and his biting criticism. This is not how he presents himself in all of the letters.

³Some of these ideas were developed as early as 1924 in Literature and Revolution (rpt. 1924; Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1975), and 1926, essays in Kul'tura Perexodnogo Perioda in Soginenija XXI (Moscow, 1927), pp. 359-449.

⁴See Appendix for the unedited copy of Trotsky's original letter to Rahv, written in Russian, and including his own handwritten insertions and corrections (9765).

⁵Trotsky's Diary in Exile: 1935, Trans. Elena Zamdnaya, Foreword by Jean van Heijenoort (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 103-6.

⁶"Revolutionary Art and the Fourth International" appears in English in Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38) (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970 and 1976), pp. 349-52. It first appeared in French in Littérature et révolution, ed. Maurice Nadeau (Paris: Julliard, 1964).

"A Letter to the Editors of Partisan Review" appeared in Partisan Review (August/September 1938), pp. 3-10.

The Manifesto of F.I.A.R.I. in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art, pp. 115-21, where it is entitled "Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art." The American version appears in Partisan Review as "Statement of the L.C.R.S." (Summer 1939): 125-27. In the archives it appears as a broadside entitled "Statement to American Writers and Artists," attached to a letter to Trotsky from "writers and artists group (sic)." For details of The League, please see Appendix B entitled "League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism."

⁷"Revolutionary Art and the Fourth International," pp. 350-51.

⁸p. 351.

⁹Sara Lewis is the pseudonym of Sara Jacobs or Weber, Trotsky's helper-typist at Prinkipo, Turkey in 1933 and later in France (1934). See Jean van Heijenoort, With Trotsky in Exile: From Prinkipo to Coyacan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 43. See her letter to PR (12195).

¹⁰"A Letter to the Editors of Partisan Review," p. 3.

¹¹Van Heijenoort, p. 122.

¹²Ibid.

¹³pp. 128-9.

¹⁴The letter has no date, but the catalogue to the Trotsky Archives posts 1939 as a guideline. The letter is item (2847).

¹⁵Sean Niall was Partisan Review's Paris correspondent in 1938 and 1939. According to the blurb about contributors in the Fall 1938 issue, Niall "describes himself as a young Irish poet, whose father was active in the Easter Rebellion" (p. 6). In his "Paris Letters" he reviews contemporary left French Writing. Many of his subjects figure in the correspondence with Trotsky, including Romain Rolland (Jean-Christophe), André Gide (Retour de l'U.R.S.S.), Benjamin Péret (Je ne mange pas de ce pain-là), the phenomenologist critic, Gaston Bachelard (La Psychanalyse du feu), and the surrealist poet, Nicolas Calas (Foyers d'incendie). Péret was a surrealist poet and theorist. He was a member of the International Left Opposition (subsequently the Fourth International). Franklin Rosemont, André Breton: What is Surrealism? Selected Writings (New York: Monad, 1978) says he is "a figure of central importance in (the) surrealist movement" (p. 371). Hugnet was a French critic active in the movement in the mid-1930s, but later became anti-surrealist. Rosemont says he is known "today for his slanderous attacks on the memory of Benjamin Péret" (p. 267).

¹⁶See "A Letter to the New Republic," PR, pp. 124-27.

¹⁷I use the word "undemocratic" to describe the predominant feeling of James T. Farrell, Philip Rahv, William Phillips and their friends. There is no one document that attests to this feeling, but Alan Wald writes the following:

In late May 1937, Farrell reported in his diary work of a meeting held to discuss a possible anti-Stalinist intervention into the American Writers' Congress. He has heard that those present included Philip Rahv, William Phillips, Mary McCarthy, James Rorty, Eleanor Clark, Margaret Marshall, Bruno Fischer, and Herbert Solow. Although a memorable intervention was staged there by Rahv, Macdonald, McCarthy, Phillips, and Clark in the Critics Workshop, and another by Trotskyist Harry Roskolenko (following a talk by Albert Rhys Williams), Farrell did not attend the Congress. In his diary, Farrell recorded that he did not participate because tickets were sold out when he inquired, and he was against asking any special favors of the Stalinists. Also, Farrell saw little point in trying to disrupt the conference, especially since he did not have a strong impression of the abilities of some of those who planned to intervene (James T. Farrell, pp. 72-3).

¹⁸James T. Farrell, p. 72.

¹⁹Florence Becker's letter to Trotsky, June 4, 1939, the accompanying "Resolution" (June 2-4, 1939), and her personal letter to the League (June 3, 1939) are included in Appendix A, all filed under (289).

²⁰Ferdinand Edgar Lundberg, mentioned in one of Farrell's Letters to Trotsky, was an American journalist and a professor of social philosophy. He is best known for his book, America's Sixty Families (1937).

²¹"In Reply to Mr. Lundberg," New Republic (28 June 1939), p. 202.

Including as it did at one time or another writers and artists of the calibre of Louis Aragon, André Breton, Paul Éluard, René Char, Michel Leiris, René Crêvel, Robert Desnos, Antonin Artaud, Raymond Queneau, Tristan Tzara, Pierre Naville, Max Ernst, André Masson, and Alberto Giacometti, to mention just a handful of the hundred or so who joined its ranks, the Surrealist group probably exercised a greater influence on the intellectual climate of the inter-war period in France than any other comparable movement. As such the political history of the Surrealists, who participated collectively in many of the organizations of the revolutionary left, deserves attention.

Robert S. Short, "The Politics of Surrealism 1920-1936."

"Transformer le monde", a dit Marx; 'Changer la vie', a dit Rimbaud: Ces deux mots d'ordre pour nous n'en font qu'un."

André Breton, "Discours au congrès des écrivains," Paris, 1935.

Le Passager du transatlantique juillet (1921)

"Petit Hublot de Mon Coeur"

Canada canada
mon petit canada
C'est la pomme la pomme qu'il nous faut
la pomme du Canada
la reine du Canada
reinette du canada
C'est la reine qu'il nous faut
la reine dans son panier
dans son panier percé
Son Canada sous son bras
la reine s'en alla
et la reINETTE du Canada
son chapeau percé
son panier sous son bras
ses pieds dans ses sabots
elle chantait
Lorsque le pélican pélican lassé d'un long long voyage
long voyage long voyage
et partit du pied gauche

Originally dedicated to André Breton and entitled "Memento." See Benjamin Péret, Oeuvres Complètes tome I (Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1969), p. 16, and "Notes et variantes."

As late as March, 1921, when Littérature (ed. Louis Aragon, André Breton, Philippe Soupault) published several pages of statistical tables showing which authors and other personalities, past and present, were liked and disliked by the Dadaist group, Lenin and Trotsky scored very badly indeed. Out of a possible maximum of plus 25 and a possible minimum of minus 25, Lenin scored -3.72 and Trotsky, -3.63. Even Dante and Fatty (a Paris hotelier) did better: Dante scored -1.54 and Fatty, 5.72.

From J.C. Middleton, "Bolshevism in Art: Dada and Politics," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 1962, p. 427.



CHAPTER THREE

CONTACTS BETWEEN TROTSKY AND THE PARIS SURREALISTS

Literary and art historians have debated when exactly surrealism began as a movement, separate from Dadaism, but most agree that no matter what its precise origins, it achieved international recognition when André Breton "at one stroke, in 1924, infused it with all the obscure power of dreams, of the unconscious and of rebellion."¹ The Manifeste du Surréalisme (1924) defined surrealism in the following way:

Surréalisme, n, m. Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale.

Breton continues with the "encyclopaedic" and "philosophical" definition, and names the true surrealists of the day:

Le surréalisme repose sur la croyance à la réalité supérieure de certaines formes d'associations négligées jusqu'à lui, à la toute-puissance du rêve, au jeu désintéressé de la pensée. Il tend à ruiner définitivement tous les autres mécanismes psychiques et à se substituer à eux dans la résolution des principaux problèmes de la vie. Ont fait acte de SURRÉALISME ABSOLU MM. Aragon, Baron, Boiffard, Breton, Carrive, Crevel, Delteil, Desnos, Éluard, Gérard, Limbour, Malkine, Morise, Naville, Noll, Péret, Picon, Soupault, Vitrac.²

Before this, the word itself was probably first used in 1917 by one of the most experimental poets of this century, Guillaume Apollinaire. In that year, he produced a burlesque play, Les Mamelles de Tirésias, which he described as "a surrealist drama."³ Marianne Oesterreicher-Mollwo claims, however, that Apollinaire first used the word "in the programme to Erik Satie's ballet Parade."⁴

Whichever the case, both Surrealists and literary historians credit Apollinaire for first using the word.

Surrealism at its inception was more than a particular theory of art: it was a way of thinking and feeling, and a way of life. Though its most striking application is in the world of the plastic arts, surrealism "was born in Paris," with poets as its sponsors."⁵ Its principal exponents in 1924 were André Breton, Louis Aragon and Paul Éluard. Breton was probably its "chief theoretician,"⁶ and according to his fellow surrealist and political comrade, Nicolas Calas,⁷ "the glass of water in the storm."⁸ Breton was a prolific writer, and his works include poetry, narratives, theory and manifestoes: from Mont de piété: poèmes, 1913-1919 (1919) and, with Phillippe Soupault, Les Champs magnétiques (1920) (with drawings by Francis Picabia) to Le Surréalisme et la peinture (1928) and Position politique du surréalisme (1935).

Breton met with Aragon and Soupault as early as 1917 when all three were active in the Dadaist movement, preparing its publications and "manifestations." Along with Paul Éluard, Jacques Baron, Robert Desnos, Benjamin Péret, Francis Picabia, Tristan Tzara and Roger Vitrac, they produced the widely acclaimed review, Littérature (1919-1924).⁹ Breton, Aragon and Soupault, and their friendships, were central to the success of this review. Unfortunately their relationships did not last through the twenties -- Soupault left the group in 1927 or "was excluded in 1929" or in the thirties -- the "Aragon Affair" ended in 1932, with Aragon joining the Communist Party and Breton siding with Trotsky and the "oppositionists."¹⁰

Just weeks after the Manifeste appeared, Breton and his friends produced the second "pro-surrealist" journal, La Révolution surréaliste (December 1924). It is during this time that the surrealists became more familiar with Freud's thought,

and put more effort into understanding the unconscious. (We must remember that in 1921 Breton had visited Freud in Vienna). Breton has been quoted by Rosemont as saying that "It was apparently by pure chance that a part of our mental world which we pretended not to be concerned with any longer -- and in my opinion by far the most important part -- has been brought back to light. For this we must give thanks to the discoveries of Sigmund Freud."¹¹ Despite this comment, however, other literary historians have said that this meeting between Freud and Breton was not terribly successful, though this did not affect the surrealists' admiration of Freudian ideas.¹² Breton's meditations on Freud's ideas about waking and dreaming culminated in 1932, during the surrealists' break with the PCF, in Les Vases communicants, a book which explores the constant interweaving of dream in waking life.¹³ Freud already figured in the first Manifeste, where Breton talks about his contribution to the theory of dreams.¹⁴

It was not until the summer of 1925 that the Surrealists began to reassess their resources and what they meant by 'revolution,' and yet, this is at least seven years earlier than Partisan Review's reassessment of the same phenomenon. If their revolution was not to deteriorate into an impotent non-conformism it had to be given some tangible content, if necessary social content, and it was obliged to join forces with other revolutionary intellectuals. In 1925, a new and significant element was added to the surrealist movement: politics, and social concerns. Herbert S. Gershman insists that "at no time prior to mid-1925 is there any indication that the surrealists, either individually or as a group, had any interest in things social or political."¹⁵ A new union formed between Surrealists and "the other non-conformists,"¹⁶ such as the intellectuals who associated with the Communist journal, Clarté. In part, their association was inspired by the summer colonial war in Morocco, wherein the surrealists joined with the Communist Party

and Clarté to protest the war. This led Breton, for one, to investigate the Russian Revolution and Marxist ideas about the present world order. The October issue of La Révolution surréaliste made the following declaration under the title of "La Révolution D'Abord et Toujours!," and on behalf of the following journals: "Clarté, Correspondance,¹⁷ Philosophies, La Révolution surréaliste, etc." It consists of five items: it calls for France's disarmament, individual liberation, protest against the Moroccan war, the support of intellectuals, and revolution of the spirit.¹⁸

10 Le magnifique exemple d'un désarmement immédiat, intégral et sans contrepartie qui a été donné au monde en 1917 par LÉNINE à Brest-Litovsk, désarmement dont la valeur révolutionnaire est infinie, nous ne croyons pas votre France capable de le suivre jamais.

20 En tant que, pour la plupart, mobilisable et destinés officiellement à revêtir l'abjecte capote bleu-horizon, nous repoussons énergiquement et de toutes manières pour l'avenir l'idée d'un assujettissement de cet ordre, étant donné que pour nous la France n'existe pas.

30 Il va sans dire que, dans ces conditions, nous approuvons pleinement et contresignons le manifeste lancé par le Comité d'action contre la guerre du Maroc, et cela d'autant plus que ses auteurs sont sous le coup de poursuites judiciaires.

40 Prêtres, médecins, professeurs, littérateurs, poètes, philosophes, journalistes, juges, avocats, policiers, académiciens de toutes sortes, vous tous, signataires de ce papier imbécile: "Les intellectuels aux côtés de la Patrie," nous vous dénoncerons et vous confondrons en toute occasion. Chiens dressés à bien profiter de la patrie, la seule pensée de cet os à ronger vous anime.

50 Nous sommes la révolte de l'esprit; nous considérons la Révolution sanglante comme la vengeance inéluctable de l'esprit humilié par vos oeuvres. Nous ne sommes pas des utopistes: cette Révolution nous ne la concevons que sous sa forme sociale. S'il existe quelque part des hommes qui aient vu se dresser contre eux une coalition telle qu'il n'y ait personne qui ne les réprouve (traîtres à tout ce qui n'est pas la Liberté, insoumis de toutes sortes, prisonniers de droit commun), qu'ils n'oublient pas que l'idée de Révolution est la sauvegarde la meilleure et la plus efficace de l'individu.

Among the signatories of this document are:

Georges Altmann, Victor Crastre, Camille Fégy, Marcel Fourrier, Paul Guitard, G. Montrevel.

Camille Goemans, Paul Nougé.

André Barsalou, Emile Benveniste, Norbert Gutermann, Henri Jourdan, Henri Lefebvre, Pierre Morhange, Georges Politzer, Paul Zimmermann.

Maxime Alexandre, Louis Aragon, Antonin Artaud, Georges Bessière, Joe Bousquet, André Breton, René Grevel, Robert Desnos, Paul Éluard, Max Ernst, Théodore Fraenkel, Michel Leiris, Georges Limbour, Georges Malkine, André Masson, Douhan Matitch, Max Morise, Georges Neveux, Marcel Noll, Benjamin Péret, Philippe Soupault, Jaques Viot.

In this same issue of La Révolution surréaliste appeared the first evidence of André Breton's growing affection for and belief in Leon Trotsky and his ideas about art and literature. He wrote a passionate review of Trotsky's book, Lénine, and the review became an inspiration to other surrealists to learn more about Trotsky. According to Robert S. Short, "The first step towards conversion to communism was reading Trotsky's biography of Lenin. . . The autumn of 1925 saw the political conversion of the group en masse."¹⁹ At the time the majority of the other surrealists shared Breton's enthusiasm for communism, but, as Bonnet says, "collaboration with the Communists was not a simple matter."²⁰

It is necessary to take a closer look at Breton's review and the spirited (not discursive) style in which it was written. It is both a manifesto and a "call to arms," while remaining a comment on a relatively new book. It was written in part as a response to Paul Eluard and Louis Aragon, who had attacked the Russian Revolution in La Révolution surréaliste a few months earlier. This is ironic because it was Eluard and Aragon who, in the end, adapted themselves to Stalinism.

Breton begins by asking his readers not to prejudge the Revolution in Russia, as it has not come to its end: "Pour nous, révolutionnaires, il importe peu de savoir si le dernier monde est préférable à l'autre et, du reste, le moment n'est pas venu d'en juger." He continues:

Tout au plus s'agirait-il de savoir si la Révolution russe a pris fin, ce que je ne crois pas finie, une révolution de cette ampleur, si vite finie? Déjà les valeurs nouvelles seraient aussi sujettes à caution que les anciennes? Alors donc, nous ne sommes pas assez sceptiques pour en rester à cette idée.

From this Breton declares the a priori relevance of the -- albeit unfinished --

Revolution for the surrealist cosmology, demanding his colleagues' sympathy:

S'il se trouve parmi nous des hommes qu'une pareille crainte laisse encore hésitants, il va sans dire que je m'oppose à ce qu'ils engagent avec eux, si peu que ce soit, l'esprit général dont nous nous réclamons, qui ne doit rester tendu vers rien tant que vers la réalité révolutionnaire, qui doit nous y faire parvenir par tous les moyens et à tout prix. (Breton's emphasis)

This "réalité révolutionnaire" is born of the surrealist precept that "surréalisme est avant tout un mouvement de révolte." It is, "comme la religion, le marxisme et la physique moderne," both "praxis et Weltanschauung." And as Michel Carrouges illustrates, these two aspects of surrealist cosmology are inseparable.²¹

Carrouges refers to Edgar Allan Poe and his respect for "l'esprit de négation" and its "rôle primordial" in poetic creation, and compares the surrealist belief in the same principle.²² In the same way in 1817, John Keats called upon the notion of "Negative Capability": "that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason..."²³ In this way Breton lauds the surrealist who is capable of living the revolutionary reality of his creative life, even though the Russian experience is still of uncertain merit. He says later: "je me demande pratiquement ce que nous attendons" (p. 29). He then, more than half way through his review, begins to talk about Russian revolutionaries and how they are now becoming real people, as men "parvenus au faite de leur destinée, de la destinée; et qui se comptent soudain, et qui nous parlent, et qui s'interrogent."

Breton describes Trotsky's style, and the quality of his memory of Lenin:

Trotsky se souvient de Lénine. Et tant de claire raison passe par-dessus tant de troubles que c'est comme un splendide orage qui se reposerait. Lénine, Trotsky, la simple décharge de ces deux hommes va encore une fois faire osciller des têtes et des têtes. Comprennent-elles? Ne comprennent-elles pas? Celles qui ne comprennent pas se meublent tout de même, Trotsky les meuble ironiquement de menus accessoires de bureau: la lampe de Lénine à l'ancienne Iskra, les papiers non signés qu'il rédigeait à la première personne et plus tard... enfin tout ce qui peut faire le compte aveugle de l'histoire. Et je jurerais que rien n'y manque, en perfection ni en grandeur. Ah! certes ce ne sont pas les autres hommes d'Etat que par ailleurs se garde lâchement le peuple d'Europe qui pourraient être vus sous ce jour (p. 29).

He then discusses the book, the man, Lenin, and the surrealists' "moral sense," as though he anticipated hostility to the book and/or the rigour and rationale of politics or political writing:

Car la grande révélation de ce livre, et je ne saurais assez y insister, c'est que beaucoup des idées qui nous sont ici les plus chères et desquelles nous avons pris l'habitude de faire dépendre étroitement le sens moral particulier que nous pouvons avoir, ne conditionnent nullement notre attitude en ce qui regarde la signification essentielle que nous entendons nous donner. Sur le plan moral où nous avons résolu de nous placer, il semble bien qu'un Lénine soit absolument inattaquable. Et si l'on m'objecte que d'après ce livre, Lénine est un type et que "les types ne sont pas des hommes," je demande quel est celui de nos raisonneurs barbares qui aura le front de soutenir qu'il y a quelque chose à reprendre dans les appréciations générales portées ça et là par Trotsky sur les autres et sur lui-même, et qui continuera à détester vraiment cet homme, et qui ne se laissera en rien toucher par son ton de voix, qui est parfait (p. 29).

He ends by proclaiming his unflinching devotion to the revolutionists' cause:

Il faut lire les brillantes, les justes, les définitives, les magnifiques pages de réfutation consacrées aux Lénines de Gorki et de Wells. Il faut méditer longtemps sur le chapitre qui traite de ce recueil d'écrits d'enfants consacré à la vie et à la mort de Lénine, en tous points dignes du commentaire, et sur lesquels l'auteur exerce une critique si fine et si désespérée:

"Lénine aimait à pêcher. Par une journée chaude il prenait sa ligne et s'asseyait sur le bord de l'eau, et il pensait tout le temps à la manière dont on pourrait améliorer la vie des ouvriers et des paysans."

Vive donc Lénine! Je salue ici très bas Léon Trotsky, lui qui a pu, sans le secours de bien des illusions qui nous restent et sans peut-

être comme nous croire à l'éternité, maintenir pour notre enthousiasme cet inoubliable mot d'ordre: "Et si le tocsin retentit en Occident, -- et il rententira, -- nous pourrons être alors enfoncés jusqu'au cou dans nos calculs, dans nos bilans, dans la N.E.P. mais nous répondrons à l'appel sans hésitation et sans retard: nous sommes révolutionnaires de la tête aux pieds, nous l'avons été, nous le resterons jusqu'au bout" (p. 29).

Even though Breton's review of Trotsky's biography of Lenin is "buried in reduced type in the hodge-podge section" of this controversial issue of La Révolution surréaliste, along with the collective manifesto "La révolution d'abord et toujours," it "set a tone that has changed remarkably little in forty years."²⁴ Herbert S. Gershman suggests that before this issue, the review protected itself from the "dubious respectability of political or literary engagement," publishing only "surrealist dreams, dream-inspired texts, open letters" and manifestoes of one sort or another, all this interspersed with illustrations by Man Ray, Picasso, Ernst, Klee, Masson, Chirico and others. Number 5, then, published "the first overt pact between the surrealist and the political avant-garde."²⁵ We mustn't forget that all of this is happening on the eve of Trotsky's exile from his country. "Defeated by the coalition of Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, and others, he resigned from the Commissariat of War in 1925."²⁶ Less than a year later, Trotsky made "common cause with Zinoviev and Kamenev against Stalin and formed the Joint Opposition." Towards the end of 1927 he was "expelled from the Party, and then exiled from Moscow and deported to Alma-Ata on the Russo-Chinese frontier" -- from where he continued to direct the opposition.²⁷ How aware Breton and fellow surrealists were of Trotsky's movements at this time is unclear. Despite the Party's suspicion, and despite the pamphlet Légitime Défense (1926),²⁸ Breton, Aragon, Éluard, Péret and Pierre Unik²⁹ joined the P.C.F. in January 1927. By their action these five men committed French Surrealists in general as "fellow travellers." There is some

uncertainty as to how long, for example, Breton remained a member of the P.C.F. Jack J. Roth and Gershman suggest that he may have been a party member only from January to November 1927, leaving when Trotsky and Zinoviev were expelled from the Soviet party on 12 November 1927.³⁰

Scholars maintain that the 6th issue of La Révolution surréaliste marks a political and literary turning point in the perspective of the journal and the movement. In No. 6 (Mars 1926), we find poems by Péret, Jacques Viot and Jacques Baron.³¹ The issue begins with Paul Éluard's surrealist text, "La Dame de carreau," illustrated with Giorgio de Chirico's painting, L'Après-midi d'Ariane.³² It includes Louis Aragon's "Entrée des succubes," dedicated to André Breton, decorated with an untitled sketch by Man Ray.³³ One of the more political articles is the brief "Revue de la Presse" by P. Éluard and B. Péret: it scolds Marinetti, "chef du futurisme."³⁴ At the centre of the magazine is a huge, sardonic composite ink drawing entitled "Les Buvards du conseil des ministres,"³⁵ and it is accompanied by a text of the same name on the preceding page, signed by Aragon.

The next issue of La Révolution surréaliste, No. 7, includes a few texts which might be understood as more political than others. The most tendentious is entitled "L'Opportunisme impuissant," written by Marcel Fourier.³⁶ It concludes in this fashion:

Une fois pour toutes, il s'agit de réaliser intégralement ce que représente la classe ouvrière, ce que vaut sa mission révolutionnaire, et dans l'action tout au moins--pour ceux qui ne veulent se lier auparavant par aucune doctrine d'ordre matérialiste--la rejoindre en toute circonstance, sans débat. Toute autre position est forcément contraire à l'esprit révolutionnaire.³⁷

Many articles, poems and surrealist texts less political in content than this one use the phrase "l'esprit révolutionnaire," or, as we have already witnessed, the more

popular "La réalité révolutionnaire." Phrases such as these have caused many to pronounce unequivocally the political -- as opposed to spiritual or, even, sentimental -- commitment of the surrealists to Marxism. No doubt similar phrases and other suitable verbiage are used more often in this particular issue of La Révolution surréaliste, and in many other documents after 1925, but they do not always indicate a consistent commitment to the theory and practice of Marxism. More often they indicate a belief in the liberation of the spirit, and in art's role in that liberation. A conscious and organized political activity is not the same thing. Although the surrealists proclaimed their belief in a communist ethic, their epistemology did not, could not, include subservience to party dogma. They would be naturally more at home with the battle against party dogma, or any dogma at all, and more comfortably identify with the losing side than with the "officials." Opposition requires spirit, and is susceptible to the "ideology of release," of liberation, of expression. In the next issue of La Révolution surréaliste we find a short pre-surrealist text which indicates the correspondence between liberty and the spiritual life. It is written by Jean Paul Fr. Richter, who was deemed by the Surrealists to be "the precursor of the 'black Bible'."³⁸ It appears under Max Ernst's unusual painting, La Belle Saison.³⁹

LA LIBERTÉ, DONNE L'ESPRIT (ET L'ÉGALITÉ AVEC LUI),
L'ESPRIT DONNE LA LIBERTÉ.

DANS LA VEILLE, NOUS FAISONS CE QUE NOUS VOULONS; DANS
LE RÊVE, NOUS VOULONS CE QUE NOUS FAISONS.

POUR L'IMAGINATION, IL N'Y A JAMAIS DE FORMES FIXES, MAIS
SEULEMENT DES FORMES QUI DEVIENNENT; ELLE NE CONÇOIT
QU'UNE NAISSANCE, ET PAR CONSÉQUENT UNE CESSATION
D'EXISTENCE ÉTERNELLES. (Emphasis theirs)

On the next few pages we find Paul Éluard's article "D.A.F. de Sade, écrivain fantastique et révolutionnaire." It is clear from this piece that Éluard

praises de Sade because he is a somewhat bizarre personnage, and because he has an imagination which is ~~active~~ despite the world's attempts to restrict it by imprisoning him. Éluard says "il put confronter son génie et celui de tout un peuple délirant de force et de liberté...", and, "La Révolution le trouva dévoué corps et âme."⁴⁰

It is not unfair to say that in spite of the claim to political spirit and commitment, most of La Révolution surréaliste consisted of non-political, creative writing, and of sketches or paintings. Patrick Waldberg says, in fact, that much of what is now popular gallery material first appeared in the pages of the surrealist publications. "La Révolution surréaliste, like Littérature before it, owes [Man Ray] its most beautiful pictures."⁴¹ Certainly many of the surrealist manifestoes were hatched in La Révolution surréaliste, including the first editorial by J.A. Boiffard, Éluard and Vitrac. It gave its blessing to "l'exaltation surréaliste des mystiques, des inventeurs et des prophètes et nous passons." It ended with this declaration: "La Révolution...la Révolution...Le réalisme, c'est émonder les arbres, le surréalisme, c'est émonder la vie." It was followed by the slogan and a short text to explain it, "OUVREZ LES PRISONS, LICENCIEZ L'ARMÉE" in Number Two.⁴² Each issue included "Rêves," by the most prominent of the surrealists: Antonin Artaud, Paul Éluard, Max Morise, Pierre Naville, Raymond Queneau, Jacques-André Boiffard. Or they included "Textes Surréalistes," again by the most prominent surrealists. Most popular in the earlier issues were the "Lettres" to various constabularies: "Lettre aux Médecins-Chefs des Asiles de Fous," for example, condemns psychiatrists for incarcerating perfectly healthy -- in fact superior -- men and women.

But the surrealists went further than this. In 1928 Louis Aragon and André Breton wrote one of their definitions for various states of mental anguish, this time

for the condition of "hysteria." Published in La Révolution Surréaliste (No. 11), this piece is a good example of the surrealist rejection of both normal aesthetic categories and conventional psychological prognoses. They say they propose "a fresh definition" of hysteria as follows:

Hysteria is a more or less irreducible mental condition, marked by the subversion, quite apart from any delirium-system, of the relations established between the subject and the moral world under whose authority he believes himself, practically, to be. This mental condition is based on the need of reciprocal seduction, which explains the hastily accepted miracles of medical suggestion (or countersuggestion). Hysteria is not a pathological phenomenon and may in all respects be considered as a supreme means of expression.⁴³

Hysteria, then, becomes a vehicle for a more authentic form of self-expression. It is also, however, the product of the conditions of social life which do not particularly encourage higher states of being, and, moreover, it is that condition which intimidates the medical profession. A doctor, they say, "seeks to deny a thing outside his province." Breton and Aragon see hysteria as part of the long tradition of mystical and spiritual experience: "of divine hysteria in antiquity, of infernal in the Middle Ages, from the possessed of Loudun to the flagellants of Our Lady of Sorrows. . . , to the mythical, erotic or merely lyrical definitions, and to the social and learned definitions."⁴⁴

Over a period of two years Breton's notable Le surréalisme et la peinture was published in serial form in La Révolution surréaliste (nos. 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10); it probed the relationship between surrealism and art, and was the first document to do so. The Second Manifeste de Surréalisme was published in the twelfth issue of the review which did not appear until 1929.

It is interesting that no poetry appeared in the review until the fourth issue, and even then, few poems were published. The first poems included Aragon's "Les Frères la Côte," dedicated to the American communist Malcolm Cowley,

and "Mimosas," a poem dedicated "À la démoralisation." It also included poems named after other surrealists, written by Éluard; it was common for surrealists to refer to each other, write to and about each other, draw and paint each other. Éluard's poems are entitled "Georges Braque" and "André Masson." Masson is important because he was one of the first painters to join the movement, (1924), but his stay was short: he was expelled in 1928. Until then "automatic drawings" appeared in almost every issue of La Révolution surréaliste.

The first of Péret's poems appeared in No. 6. Above and beside Picasso's Femmes Devant la Mer appeared "La Mort Héroïque du Lieutenant Condamine de la Tour" and "La Mort de Madame Cognacq," two poems among six in the magazine which revolve around the theme of death. Péret's are most difficult to read. To quote J.H. Matthews' introduction to Vingt Poèmes/Péret's Score,⁴⁵ Péret's "verse does not aim to bridge the distance between the real and the surreal; it places us unequivocally in the realm of the latter." There is no room for realism or politics here.

Péret has been considered one of the more revolutionary of the surrealist poets, in part because he is so aggressive with his readers, and in part because he really did make one of the longest commitments to political activity of all the surrealists. He joined the P.C.F. in 1927 along with Breton, Aragon, Éluard and Pierre Unik. In fact Gershman says -- paranthenetically -- "(Many years later Péret claimed that he had been a member of the C.P. since 1925, which may be true, but there is no evidence that he was very active prior to his friends' joining)."⁴⁶ He corresponded with Jean van Heijenoort much later (1938) when "Van" was in Coyoacan (6977, 6978); both letters are included in the appendix. As mentioned earlier, van Heijenoort sent Péret's poetry to Trotsky when he was in Norway and he thinks Trotsky never really liked it.⁴⁷ Péret speaks for Breton, it

seems, and Van speaks for Trotsky, "The Old Man." This way relations between the surrealists and Trotsky were hurried along, and anecdotes were exchanged through the instruments of Jean van Heijenoort and Benjamin Péret.

Number 7 of La Révolution surréaliste includes eleven pages of poetry -- more than ever before, and certainly more than we find in Partisan Review at the time. Almost half of them are by Robert Desnos and include part of his series entitled "Poèmes à la Mystérieuse." They are devoted to the mystery and the sorrow of love, sleep and dream, night and death. None of Desnos' poems even touch on politics. They are lyrical and closer to Éluard in style than Péret. Desnos, we must remember, was one of the originators of surrealism, and especially of automatic writing, but he left the movement only three years after this poem was written. 1929 was also the year that the Czechoslovak surrealist group was founded (including poets Vitezlav Nezval, Karel Teig and Jindrich Styrsky). Incidentally, Desnos died in a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia in 1945, before which time he had returned to fixed verse forms and altogether abandoned surrealist notions of poetic creation.⁴⁸

This issue also includes Éluard's romantic "Vivre Ici," and Artaud's unusual "Invocation à la Momie."⁴⁹ Finally in Number 8 we see Breton's poetry for the first time. The poems are unnamed, but they are numbered I and II. They are personal, no mention of politics, a lot of invocation of the riddle-like quality of his life, and many similes and metaphors which seem slightly absurd:

J'aimerais n'avoir jamais commencé
Et m'enquérir de la vie
Comme un roi jadis rendait la justice sous
un chêne
Le monde serait un crible...

J'aurais l'air de quelqu'un qui ne se
souvient pas
D'être déjà descendu dans la mine

Et je regarderais autour de moi sans rien
voir
Comme un chasseur adroit dans un pays
de décombres...

J'interroguais la vie comme mille sages
insoupçonnable sous des habits de mendiants
Dans les gorges du Thibet
comme mille morts la verdure brisée
de fleurs⁵⁰

Alongside Breton's surreal poem is one of the many advertisements for Pierre Naville's new and controversial political book, La Révolution et les intellectuels: Que peuvent faire les Surréalistes? Position de la question, (1926). This book helped to determine the political direction the surrealists were to take in the coming decade. At the time it was instrumental in convincing Breton that party membership was the only way forward. In response to Naville's attack on the surrealists, and with a genuine desire to join the party, Breton wrote Légitime défense (1926).⁵¹ Franklin Rosemont's own passionate and "surrealist" introduction to his translation of the document situates it in the political climate of the time:

This is not only an aggressive defence of surrealism against the incomprehension of various Communist party officials but also a merciless critique of their opportunism and philistinism, as exemplified notably by Henri Barbusse. That liberal, humanitarian, pacifist, mystic, notwithstanding his anti-Leninist class-collaborationist attitudes and actions, was a leading literary figure of the French CP.

Legitimate Defence has nothing in common with mere ultra-left cant or the ivory tower of so many self-serving petit-bourgeois intellectuals. It is a passionate appeal by Breton, to his fellow Communists, imploring them never to lose sight of the revolutionary dream, never to mitigate the furious will indispensable to the realization of this dream...⁵²

As Herbert Gershman has said, in the early years of La Révolution surréaliste the surrealists were: "Revolutionaires, yes, but not yet Marxists or Trotskyites: that would come later in the long hot summer with Breton's reading of Trotsky and the drafting of La Révolution d'abord et toujours."⁵³ Though one

understands what Gershman means here, in fact the more political, action-oriented praxis of the surrealists changed only slightly over the years, even though certain individuals became devotees of Trotsky, one of the leaders of the much admired Russian Revolution. The surrealists, with the possible exception of Pierre Naville, (who, when he became a political organizer, stopped making art) could never really integrate art into their communist ideals. As we see above, the surrealist poem and the political essay remain distinct and eternally separate. The surrealists could, however, create a movement, a movement which had influence in art circles and among the left-wing intelligentsia of the day if only because it had a theoretical and spiritual commitment to the revolutionary impulse in life -- and as a consequence in political action. Gershman says later that "Breton has no quarrel with the theoretical basis of Marxism, nor with Naville's interpretation of it in his 1926 manifesto La Révolution et les intellectuels. But he does not care for Henri Barbusse or his dull-witted daily, L'Humanité." He would join the party, but it had to be on his terms. Revolution had two parts: the personal, "inside" world, and the "outside." Breton

would be a fullfledged member of the Party, a leader among leaders -- they revolutionizing the outside world, he the inside. "While waiting for the Revolution to succeed," wrote Breton, "it is imperative that the (surrealist) experiments dealing with mental activity be permitted, and with no outside control, even Marxist control."⁵⁴

As with left writers in New York in the thirties there is a conflict between the artist and the political activist. Jack J. Roth says:

What appeared to be at issue in the confrontation between Surrealism and the PCF were differing conceptions of the role of art and the artist. But there was more to the matter. The Surrealists, notwithstanding Breton's insistence, were not Communists nor could they be.⁵⁵

Roth agrees that the Surrealists were interested in revolution of a sort -- but he calls it "the revolution of the mind." He maintains that Breton's adherence to

Communism is more accidental than intentional. He claims that he had little choice in 1927:

By 1927 Breton too had to choose. With a revolutionary doctrine whose relevance was not clear, with a propaganda disseminated by handbills and a precariously established periodical, with a notoriety gained by public brawls, without anything that could be called an organization, and without the possibility of mass support, the Surrealists had little choice. The alternative was to remain an avant-garde movement in the arts . . . Breton . . . had by then convinced himself that the Bolshevik Revolution and the proletarian revolt it sponsored constituted an indispensable precondition to his own "revolution."⁵⁶

Roth also explains that it was a problem that Breton -- as a party member -- would not reject Freud. He says that "Trotsky had been sympathetic to Freud. But Trotsky was now in exile, and a taboo had descended on Freud and his followers. Pavlovian behaviorism had become the new orthodoxy."⁵⁷

Roth goes on to say that the more Breton tried to "establish his Marxist credentials," the more obvious were his own personal contradictions about Marxism, and the more it seemed he was trying to "radicalize" Freud. To be sure, to radicalize Freud was acceptable to the surrealists, especially when compared to the restraint of Pavlov and the growing conformity of the U.S.S.R. to seemingly "bourgeois" norms and mores. Historian Louis Janover respects the new combinations that Breton and the surrealists made in the modern era. He says, yes, "le freudo-marxisme et le surréalisme formeront le fond commun d'idées dans lequel l'intelligentsia de gauche puisera ses normes d'action et de pensée." He continues with his theory that the surrealists are the foundation of a modern intelligentsia which is itself revolutionary:

Le surréalisme est tout à la fois ferment de dissolution et tentative de sauvetage de l'activité artistique et littéraire traditionnelle. Il révèle le contenu subversif de la poésie, sans toutefois réussir à l'arracher complètement à la littérature.⁵⁸

Marguerite Bonnet characterizes the years after 1929 as years of strict adherence to the Communist Party (while Anna Balakian and Mary-Ann Caws claim that Breton's most political years were after 1935, after his break with the party.)⁵⁹ La Révolution surréaliste ceased publication in 1929, and was replaced by Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution (1930-1933). Bonnet says that's where Breton put all his "political activity." She continues to say that he could not remain in the Communist Party for long because he could "not see how the role of the revolutionary intellectual, as he conceived it, could be fulfilled."⁶⁰ She goes on to say:

In all major questions, surrealism, which does not pretend to offer a surrealist theory of social revolution, continues to align itself with the camp of the Soviet Union and the Communist International, however numerous the Communists' reservations regarding them and the interest provoked in Breton by the personality and thought of Leon Trotsky. Breton seems to have believed that the road of revolutionary action would, at that time, lead by necessity through the Communist Party.⁶¹

It is interesting to note that in 1931 Breton published one of his most romantic love poems, "L'Union Libre," a poem which had naught to do with the Party or politics. Breton himself, was apparently summoned before the Control Commission of the PCF at least five times: now that he had become a real party communist, why did he still have to call himself a surrealist? The party's officials were apparently outraged by the contents of La Révolution surréaliste: Breton agreed to make a few changes. Each of the surrealists who joined the party were allocated to a particular party cell to do work.⁶² Breton's assignment proved untenable; Short says:

They all beat a hasty retreat when Breton, who found himself posted among the gas-workers in rue Lafayette, was asked to make a statistical report on the state of that industry in Italy. 'I couldn't do it,' he confessed [in the Second manifeste].⁶³

Perhaps Ilya Ehrenbourg was right when he said that the surrealists' revolutionary activities were a cloak for immorality -- "but the proletariat was not deceived."⁶⁴ It is interesting that Ehrenbourg's view of the surrealists were published in Partisan Review in 1935 (October-November) in an article entitled "The Surrealists." Ehrenbourg -- as it is spelled in Partisan Review -- is vicious in his condemnations. He begins with a cruel analogy:

IN AN OLD CHARLIE CHAPLIN FILM there is a picturesque if somewhat unappetizing incident. The hero enters a restaurant and orders fowl. He is no ordinary glutton, but the daintiest of epicures, and he likes his bird only when it is decidedly "high." He accordingly goes out into the kitchen to see to it that the pheasant is sufficiently tainted. For connoisseurs of his sort, it is customary to hang the fowl up by the neck. When the neck rots off and the bird drops to the floor, the pheasant is ready to be put into the oven. The chef and his assistants are forced to hold their noses; even their sense of professional duty is not strong enough to enable them to overcome their repugnance. Not so the delighted gourmet; he inhales the spoiled meat odor as greedily as if it came from a cluster of lilies of the valley.

I am not quite sure as to whether the Parisian "Surrealists" are to be compared to the pheasant strung up by the neck or to the wily chef. I am not sure as to whether they are mentally sick or merely very clever, these young fellows who make a trade on insanity. One thing is certain, they have a following of connoisseurs, and well to do ones at that: a copy of a poem by René Crevel on "Imperial Japan" paper sells for three hundred francs, while the work of another poet, P  ret, brings five hundred francs the copy.⁶⁵

Ehrenbourg continues by explaining how it is that the workers are not fooled by outlandish surrealist publications written on fancy paper:

In the face of all this, they have the nerve to call the rag they publish Surrealism in the "Service of the Revolution. So, you didn't know what it was they were up to, with all that talk of glass globules? Well, well, so it is the revolution they're serving, is it? The Surrealists realize that it is getting harder every day to "shock the bourgeoisie." You can't live on paint-tubes and velvet. Accordingly, they interlard their exercises with quotations from Lenin. But the bourgeois is not so simple-minded as all that. He knows that these phosphorescent pheasants are not dangerous. As for the workers, they do not read poems on Japanese paper and magazines that come in outlandish covers; but if their eyes should happen to light on these publications, with their smut and their slurs on labour, they would not be able to conceive of "service to the revolution" being associated with such ordinary street hooliganism.

From Arthur Rimbaud, who wrote inspired poems and who fought for the Commune, to these pitiful degenerates, capable only of triflings, is a period of sixty years, representing the lifetime of an entire class and the outcome of a great culture.⁶⁶

Mary Ann Caws and Maurice Nadeau see the rupture between the surrealists and the communists as inevitable and irreparable. Caws, like Roth and Bonnet, says that "in the early 1930's the Surrealists allied themselves for a time with the Communists, in the hope of a definite conciliation between the two movements, the two "revolutions." She explains the "various irritations" which transpired in this fashion:

Breton publicly defended an anarchistic poem of Aragon ("Le Front rouge") as poetry, therefore not to be taken seriously on a political level: see the pamphlet Misère de la poésie. Under pressure (according to some historians), Aragon, having just returned from the Soviet Union, renounced Breton's defense of him and split off from the Surrealists. The repercussions were great, protests on one side or the other came in from all over the world, insisting that the "content" of a poem be restricted to the realm of poetry, or refusing to relegate it only to that realm. That Breton himself was assigned to a cell of gas workers and given the duller sort of work to do seems to indicate that the French Communist party was never to have great faith in the Surrealists, whose allegiance was, so it appeared to them, more to a poetic attitude than to a practical commitment.⁶⁷

Nadeau doesn't doubt Breton's commitment to "la Révolution," but claims that a set of circumstances made party commitment impossible -- especially after 1935. While Breton and Éluard were working hard to produce the surrealist document, L'Immaculée conception (1930)⁶⁸ -- a document which Ehrenbourg would have abhorred because it is so experimental and, hence, he would have thought, apolitical -- "Georges Sadoul et Aragon font, en Russie, un voyage aux multiples conséquences."⁶⁹ As Robert S. Short has explained earlier, Breton's party assignment was impossible to carry out; and thus, had long-lasting consequences for the entire surrealist movement.

Breton, qui n'a pu continuer son travail de militant à la cellule "du gaz" ou l'avait placé la confiance du Parti communiste, se détache de

plus en plus de ce dernier, tandis que d'autre part, il met le nouvel organe du mouvement aux ordres de la IIIe Internationale. Ces contradictions détermineront finalement une nouvelle crise dans les années suivantes.⁷⁰

The "nouvelle crise" refers to the ensuing splits in the movement, the "Aragon Affair" and the Trotsky-Breton sympathy. Franklin Rosemont talks about Breton's "distress" in this period, largely due to "the defection of Aragon and the suicide of Crevel."⁷¹ No doubt Mayakovsky's suicide, too, had its effect, as we can see from Breton's article in Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution and the accompanying translations of some of his poems.⁷²

Politics was not really at the root of Surrealism explains Jack J. Roth in his 1977 essay on the subject.⁷³ There is an element of pathos in the evolution of surrealism: the dilemma of the aesthete who flirts with communism. If he joins the revolution his liberty and creativity are threatened; if he does not and succeeds as an artist, he falls captive to his own culture. This same view is expressed in Breton's own Position politique du surréalisme.⁷⁴ Roth's comparisons and comments are valuable, and so I quote at length. First, for all their revolutionary idealism, the surrealists appealed to the bourgeoisie, not the working class:

In retrospect, Surrealism in its encounter with Marxism had only acquired excess baggage, while the pursuit of proletarian revolt had been an exercise in chasing phantoms. The Surrealists, to speak in a later idiom, were doing their own thing, and very well indeed, in the midst of the Parisian bourgeois world they detested. And the bourgeoisie loved it.

Roth sees this as part of the accommodation between Marx and Freud:

Outside the carnival atmosphere of Surrealism in France were other attempts at accommodation between Marx and Freud. Starting with Marxism was the Institut für Sozialforschung founded in 1923. The so-called Frankfurt School originally had close ties with the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow. . . . The art critic Walter Benjamin, in fact had noted affinities with Surrealism. What impelled the evolution of the school was a growing conviction that the proletariat was incapable of performing its historic mission, coupled with a progressive disenchantment with Stalinism both prewar and postwar. What

attended their evolution was the steady abandonment of Marxian fundamentals and a heightened appreciation of the revolutionary potential of Freudian thought. The Frankfurt School, as the Surrealists before (but from a different vantage point and probably unknown to Breton and his following), also turned to the quest for personal happiness. Emphasis changed from the class struggle to the conflict between the nature of man and the social order. Not all members of the school reached the same conclusions. Horkheimer and Adorno became prophets of gloom. Herbert Marcuse, however, having digested Freud's psycho-analysis in the thirties and Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism in the forties, turned in the fifties to a tentative revolutionary optimism. But in both tendencies little remained to historic Marxism. It was the 'humanist' Marx, existential and libertarian, who was cited--Breton too had cited him.⁷⁵

Roth's comments are poignant. Not only does he see the surrealist movement more attached to the bourgeoisie than the working class, but he also attributes this tendency to a) their use of and belief in Freud and psychoanalysis, b) the nonetheless sincere commitment to Marxism as a philosophy of life, or social life, c) a disappointment in the proletariat to fulfill its "historic mission" in the U.S.S.R., d) a "progressive disenchantment with Stalinism, and e) an essentially apolitical quest for "personal happiness." In Roth's estimation, this series of developments connects Breton and the Surrealists to the Frankfurt School, who, in his opinion, also turned to the quest for personal happiness and saw it, at least in part, in the resolution of the conflict between the nature of man and the social order. Roth explains that Marcuse, for example, became a philosophical prophet of "revolutionary optimism". D. W. Fokkema and Elrud Kunne-Ibsch explain that the neo-Marxists--and Marcuse is among them--are theoreticians who "while often relying on Marx and Engels, do not interpret their writings in a dogmatic way, or accept the absolute supremacy of the Communist Party in problems of culture and science."⁷⁶ This, it seems to me, can also be said of Breton and his followers. Breton's attachment to Trotsky, in light of the above, is sensible. Trotsky did not reject Freud, though he did reject Soviet socialism, and although he would not

agree with a dismissal of the working class as the bringer of revolution, he would not dismiss the value of, let us say, bourgeois art and democracy.⁷⁷ Both Breton and Marcuse would find refuge in the writings of the "humanist" Marx, and to a degree, Trotsky's thought would be compatible with these writings. The equation is a version of liberation + humanistic Marxism and art, or personal freedom = psychological freedom + social liberation. This equation reminds one of Wilhelm Reich and his theory of "sexual economy." It is no surprise that he, a psychoanalyst, and a physician, tried to establish contact with Trotsky in 1933 and 1935. Like the Surrealists, Reich was committed to Marxism, but he was also committed to Freud and to what he called in his letters the "kommunistische sexualpolitische." He believed that the mobilization of the masses depended on their sexual liberation, an idea not well-received by the Communist Party. Reich's letter to Trotsky (4235), and Trotsky's response (9780) are included in Appendix A. It is their mutual disaffection with the U.S.S.R. that connects them, and their correspondence does not develop into a continuing dialogue, as did the correspondence between Breton and Trotsky. Approximately 23 letters were exchanged from 1938 to 1948. Three of those are housed in the Open Section of the Archives (T1), and one two-page letter (372) is from Jacqueline Breton to Trotsky. Although Reich wrote long, theoretical letters to Trotsky, Trotsky did not respond in kind.

In 1936 Breton made his disaffection for the U.S.S.R. -- a "prétendu monde socialiste" -- clear in a document entitled "Déclaration d'André Breton au Meeting du P.O.I. en Décembre 1936" (15890). He quotes from Marx and Engels in order to ensure Trotsky of his devotion; he suggests to the meeting that they send Trotsky a letter to that effect. He makes his affection for Trotsky clear. His declaration reads this way:

Camarades,

d'un seul coeur, à la fin de cette réunion, je souhaite que nous puissions adresser à Léon Trotsky une lettre dans laquelle, paraphrasant celle du 9 Mai 1851 d'Engels à Marx, nous lui disions: "Que les injures à ton adresse se multiplient en Russie et ailleurs, il fallait bien s'y attendre. Tu te trouves maintenant dans la fière situation d'être attaqué par deux mondes à la fois" et nous ne parlons plus de l'ancien et du nouveau mondes, nous parlons du monde capitalist et du prétendu monde socialiste, tel qu'on a eu le front de soutenir qu'il pouvait être édifié dans un seul pays.

"Quant on passe aux calomnies, quand le philistin démocratique, ajoutait Engels, ne se borne plus à la simple conviction que l'on est le monstre le plus noir" (Le philistin démocratique peut-être ici remplacé par le philistin communiste), quand on l'accuse, toi, Trotsky, non seulement d'avoir fait assassiner Kirov, d'avoir voulu assassiner Staline mais encore de t'être mis pour cela aux ordres de la Gestapo, "ce n'est pas assez faire que de simplement refuser à ajouter foi à de telles insanités. Il est nécessaire de répondre tout de suite. Le temps n'est plus où l'on pouvait attendre quelques douzaines de ces élucubrations "pour partir à fond de train et, toujours selon l'expression d'Engels, d'un seul coup de pied écraser ces punaises". Quant au fait de te rendre impossible le séjour en URSS, en Turquie, en France, en Norvège, ils y comptent bien au Mexique et ailleurs, "ne leur laissons plus ce plaisir". Le temps n'est plus où Engels pouvait dire à Marx: "Les seuls gens qui, puissent, en Allemagne, devenir dangereux pour nous, ce sont les assassins mais nul n'a plus le courage de lancer contre nous des gens de cette espèce".

Il suffit qu'aujourd'hui Staline ait pris à sa solde les meurtriers: camarade Trotsky nous ne t'abandonnerons pas à leurs coups. Engels disait encore à Marx: "La racaille rouge démocratique ou même communiste ne nous aimera jamais". C'est cette racaille même qui approuve qu'on ait instruit contre toi, contre ton fils, contre Smirnov, Kamenev et Zinoviev l'ignoble procès de Moscou d'où tu sors à nos yeux intact comme la Révolution d'Octobre toute piétinée qu'elle est, comme la Révolution mondiale que tu incarnes de jour en jour plus persécuté, de jour en jour plus grand.

Ils ont fait de toi; le symbole des traditions impérissables de 1905 et de 1917 bafouées aujourd'hui en URSS presque sur toute la ligne mais remises pleinement en vigueur par la lutte du prolétariat espagnol pour sa libération. D'un côté, le retour sans cesse accéléré en arrière: négation de la dictature du prolétariat au profit de celle d'un homme; restauration de la famille, de la patrie annonçant pour demain celle de la religion; rétablissement sous toutes ses formes de l'inégalité entre les hommes; étouffement dans le sang de toute velléité critique; réduction au dehors de tous les objectifs révolutionnaires à l'application du mot d'ordre: soutien inconditionnel de l'URSS et, pour cela, réalisation anticipée de "l'union sacrée" pour la guerre (l'immonde guerre présentée comme

issue fatale et même souhaitable, l'immonde guerre qui, de part et d'autre, une fois de plus, sera - que disons-nous, est déjà - travestie en dernière guerre, en guerre du droit, de la civilisation et de la liberté!). De l'autre côté le formidable bond en avant de l'Espagne: réalisation instantanée dans le danger du bloc invincible de la classe ouvrière; élargissement des perspectives de la lutte à celle du prolétariat international; anéantissement considéré comme primordial de tout l'appareil religieux et, nous l'espérons, au dessus de tout cela, constitution d'une idéologie révolutionnaire active, formée à l'épreuve des faits, qui ne se préoccupe pas de reproduire telle ou telle idéologie déjà existante ou pourrissante, mais qui concilie les aspirations fondamentales tant de nos camarades de la FAI, de la CNT, du POUM que du Parti Communiste ibérique dans la mesure où ces dernières cesseront d'être attentatoires aux précédentes. Sans préjudice de l'aide matérielle accordée par l'URSS au gouvernement espagnol et de la vaillance dont font preuve les membres du PC enrôlés dans la colonne Internationale, nous disons qu'il règne à l'intérieur de la 3^e Internationale une conception du bien social on ne peut plus alarmante, fondée qu'elle est sur la sous-estimation, sur la dégradation des idées de liberté, de justice et de dignité humaines, seules génératrices et garantes de progrès. Il faut en finir avec cette conception déshonorante et bestiale, sans laquelle nul ne saurait ajouter foi aux aveux délirants des seize fusillés de Moscou.

Camarade Trotsky, toi qui fus le grand organisateur de l'Armée Rouge, ta place ne serait pas au Mexique. Puisque presque toutes les frontières se sont fermées devant toi il est du moins une porte qui devrait s'ouvrir toute grande pour te laisser passer et c'est celle de Barcelone. Mais nous voyons d'ici le chantage! Aussi devant l'impossibilité où nous sommes de pouvoir demain acclamer une seule cause, qui soit à la fois celle de la Révolution espagnole en la personne indistincte de tous nos camarades anarchistes, communistes ou socialistes et celle de la Révolution russe en ta personne comme en celles de toutes les victimes révolutionnaires du Thermidor stalinien, du moins nous imposerons le respect de ta pensée comme de ta vie, nous veillerons à ce que rien ne vienne interrompre leur témoignage irremplaçable.

Soon after Breton wrote this declaration, links between the Surrealists and Partisan Review were forged. Pour un art révolutionnaire indépendante was translated by Dwight Macdonald for Partisan Review in the Fall of 1938, so that the connections between the two groups of Trotsky's followers were well in place by then. Moreover there is clear evidence in the Closed Section of Trotsky's Archives that Breton corresponded with Partisan Review before the document was

actually published. From Coyoacan, on the 27th of July, 1938, Rivera and Breton sent the following letter to Partisan Review confirming the sending of "ce manifeste" (Pour Un Art...). The letter makes it very clear that they mean to publish the document simultaneously in France and Mexico, and then circulate it among potentially favourable milieux -- in countries such as England, Belgium, Holland, Scandinavia, Czechoslovakia, Latin America, and Australia. The comrades ask for comments and for help in organizing interested potential members of the international arts organization. The letter is brief and to the point. It reads:

Toute l'orientation de Partisan Review et les propos que nous avons déjà échangés font que vous êtes les premiers à qui nous songeons à adresser ce manifeste. Nous nous proposons de le publier à la fois au Mexique et en France, puis de le diffuser dans les divers pays où il est susceptible de rencontrer un accueil favorable (Angleterre, Belgique, Hollande, Pays scandinaves, Tchécoslovaquie, Amérique latine, Australie, etc.). Votre appui nous serait extrêmement précieux. Voulez-vous avoir l'obligeance de nous dire ce que vous pensez de notre initiative et, le cas échéant, si nous pouvons compter sur vous pour mener à bien dans votre pays les tâches d'organisation qui s'imposent. (13806)

This significant document had been written in the summer of that same year at Coyoacan. Breton explains in a 1938 speech reproduced in La Clé des champs:

Ce manifeste a paru sous la signature de Diego Rivera et la mienne et s'intitule: Pour un art révolutionnaire indépendante. Ce conclut à la fondation d'une Fédération Internationale d'Art Révolutionnaire Indépendante (F.I.A.R.I.) dont le bulletin mensuel paraîtra pour la première fois fin décembre. Je précise que l'on est plus redevable à Trotsky qu'à Rivera et à moi-même de l'indépendance totale qui y est revendiquée au point de vue artistique. C'est en effet le camarade Trotsky qui, mis en présence du projet où j'avais formulé: "Toute license en art, sauf contre la révolution prolétarienne," nous a mis en garde contre les nouveaux abus qu'on pourrait faire de ce dernier membre de phrase et l'a biffé sans hésitation.⁷⁸

The footnote at the end of the document as it appears in La Clé des Champs maintains that "bien que publié sous ces deux signatures, ce manifeste a été rédigé en fait par Léon Trotsky et André Breton." For apparently "tactical

reasons" Trotsky asked that Rivera's name appear in place of his own. Because both men were involved in the production of this document, it is worthwhile to reproduce it in its entirety.

POUR UN ART RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE INDÉPENDANT

On peut prétendre sans exagération que jamais la civilisation humaine n'a été menacée de tant de dangers qu'aujourd'hui. Les vandales, à l'aide de leurs moyens barbares, c'est-à-dire fort précaires, détruisirent la civilisation antique dans un coin limité de l'Europe. Actuellement, c'est toute la civilisation mondiale, dans l'unité de son destin historique, qui chancelle sous la menace de forces réactionnaires armées de toute la technique moderne. Nous n'avons pas seulement en vue la guerre qui s'approche. Dès maintenant, en temps de paix, la situation de la science et de l'art est devenue absolument intolérable.

En ce qu'elle garde d'individuel dans sa genèse, en ce qu'elle met en oeuvre de qualités subjectives pour dégager un certain fait qui entraîne un enrichissement objectif, une découverte philosophique, sociologique, scientifique ou artistique apparaît comme le fruit d'un hasard précieux, c'est-à-dire comme une manifestation plus ou moins spontanée de la nécessité. On ne saurait négliger un tel apport, tant du point de vue de la connaissance générale (qui tend à ce que se poursuive l'interprétation du monde) que du point de vue révolutionnaire (qui, pour parvenir à la transformation du monde, exige qu'on se fasse une idée exacte des lois qui régissent son mouvement). Plus particulièrement, on ne saurait se désintéresser des conditions mentales dans lesquelles cet apport continue à se produire et, pour cela, ne pas veiller à ce que soit garanti le respect des lois spécifiques auxquelles est astreinte la création intellectuelle.

Or le monde actuel nous oblige à constater la violation de plus en plus générale de ces lois, violation à laquelle répond nécessairement un avilissement de plus en plus manifeste, non seulement de l'oeuvre d'art, mais encore de la personnalité "artistique". Le fascisme hitlérien, après avoir éliminé d'Allemagne tous les artistes chez qui s'était exprimé à quelque degré l'amour de la liberté, ne fût-ce que formelle, a astreint ceux qui pouvaient encore consentir à tenir une plume ou un pinceau à se faire les valets du régime et à le célébrer par order, dans les limites extérieures de la pire convention. A la publicité près, il en a été de même en U.R.S.S. au cours de la période de furieuse réaction que voici parvenue à son apogée.

Il va sans dire que nous ne nous solidarisons pas un instant, quelle que soit sa fortune actuelle, avec le mot d'ordre: "Ni fascisme ni communisme!", qui répond à la nature du philistin conservateur et

effrayé, s'accrochant aux vestiges du passé "démocratique". L'art véritable, c'est-à-dire celui qui ne se contente pas de variations sur des modèles tout faits mais s'efforce de donner une expression aux besoins intérieurs de l'homme et de l'humanité d'aujourd'hui, ne peut pas ne pas être révolutionnaire, c'est-à-dire ne pas aspirer à une reconstruction complète et radicale de la société, ne serait-ce que pour affranchir la création intellectuelle des chaînes qui l'entravent et permettre à toute l'humanité de s'élever à des hauteurs que seuls des génies isolés ont atteintes dans le passé. En même temps, nous reconnaissons que seule la révolution sociale peut frayer la voie à une nouvelle culture. Si, cependant, nous rejetons toute solidarité avec la caste actuellement dirigeante en U.R.S.S., c'est précisément parce qu'à nos yeux elle ne représente pas le communisme, mais en est l'ennemi le plus perfide et le plus dangereux.

Sous l'influence du régime totalitaire de l'U.R.S.S. et par l'intermédiaire des organismes dits "culturels" qu'elle contrôle dans les autres pays, s'est étendu sur le monde entier un profond crépuscule hostile à l'émergence de toute espèce de valeur spirituelle. Crépuscule de boue et de sang dans lequel, déguisés en intellectuels et en artistes, trempent des hommes qui se sont fait de la servilité un ressort, du reniement de leurs propres principes un jeu pervers, du faux témoignage vénal une habitude et de l'apologie du crime une jouissance. L'art officiel de l'époque stalinienne reflète avec une cruauté sans exemple dans l'histoire leurs efforts dérisoires pour donner le change et masquer leur véritable rôle mercenaire.

La sourde réprobation que suscite dans le monde artistique cette négation éhontée des principes auxquels l'art a toujours obéi et que des États même fondés sur l'esclavage ne se sont pas avisés de contester si totalement doit faire place à une condamnation implacable. L'opposition artistique est aujourd'hui une des forces qui peuvent utilement contribuer au discrédit et à la ruine des régimes sous lesquels s'abîme, en même temps que le droit pour la classe exploitée d'aspirer à un monde meilleur, tout sentiment de la grandeur et même de la dignité humaine.

La révolution communiste n'a pas la crainte de l'art. Elle sait qu'au terme des recherches qu'on peut faire porter sur la formation de la vocation artistique dans la société capitaliste qui s'écroule, la détermination de cette vocation ne peut passer que pour le résultat d'une collision entre l'homme et un certain nombre de formes sociales qui lui sont adverses. Cette seule conjoncture, au degré près de conscience qui reste à acquérir, fait de l'artiste son allié prédisposé. Le mécanisme de sublimation, qui intervient en pareil cas, et que la psychanalyse a mis en évidence, a pour objet de rétablir l'équilibre rompu entre le "moi" cohérent et les éléments refoulés. Ce rétablissement s'opère au profit de l'"idéal du moi" qui dresse contre la réalité présente, insupportable, les puissances du monde intérieur, du "soi", communes à tous les hommes et constamment en voie d'épanouissement dans le devenir. Le besoin

d'émancipation de l'esprit n'a qu'à suivre son cours naturel pour être amené à se fondre et à se retremper dans cette nécessité primordiale: le besoin d'émancipation de l'homme.

Il s'ensuit que l'art ne peut consentir sans déchéance à se plier à aucune directive étrangère et à venir docilement remplir les cadres que certains croient pouvoir lui assigner, à des fins pragmatiques, extrêmement courtes. Mieux vaut se fier au don de préfiguration qui est l'apanage de tout artiste authentique, qui implique un commencement de résolution (virtuel) des contradictions les plus graves de son époque et oriente la pensée de ses contemporains vers l'urgence de l'établissement d'un ordre nouveau.

L'idée que le jeune Marx s'était fait du rôle de l'écrivain exige, de nos jours, un rappel vigoureux. Il est clair que cette idée doit être étendue, sur le plan artistique et scientifique, aux diverses catégories de producteurs et de chercheurs. "L'écrivain, dit-il, doit naturellement gagner de l'argent pour pouvoir vivre et écrire, mais il ne doit en aucun cas vivre et écrire pour gagner de l'argent... L'écrivain ne considère aucunement ses travaux comme un moyen. Ils sont des buts en soi, ils sont si peu un moyen pour lui-même et pour les autres qu'il sacrifie au besoin son existence à leur existence... La première condition de la liberté de la presse consiste à ne pas être un métier. Il est plus que jamais de circonstance de brandir cette déclaration contre ceux qui prétendent assujettir l'activité intellectuelle à des fins extérieures à elle-même et, au mépris de toutes les déterminations historiques qui lui sont propres, régenter, en fonction de prétendues raisons d'État, les thèmes de l'art. Le libre choix de ces thèmes et la nonrestriction absolue en ce qui concerne le champ de son exploration constituent pour l'artiste un bien qu'il est en droit de revendiquer comme inaliénable. En matière de création artistique, il importe essentiellement que l'imagination échappe à toute contrainte, ne se laisse sous aucun prétexte imposer de filière. A ceux qui nous presseraient, que ce soit pour aujourd'hui ou pour demain, de consentir à ce que l'art soit soumis à une discipline que nous tenons pour radicalement incompatible avec ses moyens, nous opposons un refus sans appel et notre volonté délibérée de nous en tenir à la formule: toute licence en art.

Nous reconnaissons, bien entendu, à l'État révolutionnaire le droit de se défendre contre la réaction bourgeoise agressive, même lorsqu'elle se couvre du drapeau de la science ou de l'art. Mais entre ces mesures imposées et temporaires d'auto-défense révolutionnaire et la prétention d'exercer un commandement sur la création intellectuelle de la société, il y a un abîme. Si, pour le développement des forces productives matérielles, la révolution est tenue d'ériger un régime socialiste de plan centralisé, pour la création intellectuelle elle doit dès le début même établir et assurer un régime anarchiste de liberté individuelle. Aucune autorité, aucune contrainte, pas la moindre trace de commandement! Les diverses associations de savants et les groupes collectifs d'artistes

qui travailleront à résoudre des tâches qui n'auront jamais été si grandioses peuvent surgir et déployer un travail fécond uniquement sur la base d'une libre amitié créatrice, sans la moindre contrainte de l'extérieur.

De ce qui vient d'être dit il découle clairement qu'en défendant la liberté de la création, nous n'entendons aucunement justifier l'indifférentisme politique et qu'il est loin de notre pensée de vouloir ressusciter un soi-disant art "pur" qui d'ordinaire sert les buts plus qu'impurs de la réaction. Non, nous avons une trop haute idée de la fonction de l'art pour lui refuser une influence sur le sort de la société. Nous estimons que la tâche suprême de l'art à notre époque est de participer consciemment et activement à la préparation de la révolution. Cependant, l'artiste ne peut servir la lutte émancipatrice que s'il s'est pénétré subjectivement de son contenu social et individuel, que s'il en a fait passer le sens et le drame dans ses nerfs et que s'il cherche librement à donner une incarnation artistique à son monde intérieur.

Dans la période présente, caractérisée par l'agonie du capitalisme, tant démocratique que fasciste, l'artiste, sans même qu'il ait besoin de donner à sa dissidence sociale une forme manifeste, se voit menacé de la privation du droit de vivre et de continuer son oeuvre par le retrait devant celle-ci de tous les moyens de diffusion. Il est naturel qu'il se tourne alors vers les organisations stalinistes qui lui offrent la possibilité d'échapper à son isolement. Mais la renonciation de sa part à tout ce qui peut constituer son message propre et les complaisances terriblement dégradantes que ces organisations exigent de lui en échange de certains avantages matériels lui interdisent de s'y maintenir, pour peu que la démoralisation soit impuissante à avoir raison de son caractère. Il faut, dès cet instant, qu'il comprenne que sa place est ailleurs, non pas parmi ceux qui trahissent la cause de la révolution en même temps, nécessairement, que la cause de l'homme, mais parmi ceux qui témoignent de leur fidélité inébranlable aux principes de cette révolution, parmi ceux qui, de ce fait, restent seuls qualifiés pour l'aider à s'accomplir et pour assurer par elle la libre expression ultérieure de tous les modes du génie humain.

Le but du présent appel est de trouver un terrain pour réunir les tenants révolutionnaires de l'art, pour servir la révolution par les méthodes de l'art et défendre la liberté de l'art elle-même contre les usurpateurs de la révolution. Nous sommes profondément convaincus que la rencontre sur ce terrain est possible pour les représentants de tendances esthétiques, philosophiques et politiques passablement divergentes. Les marxistes peuvent marcher ici la main dans la main avec les anarchistes, à condition que les uns et les autres rompent implacablement avec l'esprit policier réactionnaire, qu'il soit représenté par Joseph Staline ou par son vassal Garcia Oliver.

Des milliers et des milliers de penseurs et d'artistes isolés, dont la voix est couverte par le tumulte odieux des falsificateurs enrégimentés, sont actuellement dispersés dans le monde. De nombreuses petites revues locales tentent de grouper autour d'elles des forces jeunes, qui cherchent des voies nouvelles, et non des subventions. Toute tendance progressive en art est flétrie par le fascisme comme une dégénérescence. Toute créations libre est déclarée fasciste par les stalinistes. L'art révolutionnaire indépendant doit se rassembler pour la lutte contre les persécutions réactionnaires et proclamer hautement son droit à l'existence. Un tel rassemblement est le but de la Fédération internationale de l'art révolutionnaire indépendant (F.I.A.R.I.) que nous jugeons nécessaire de créer.

Nous n'avons nullement l'intention d'imposer chacune des idées contenues dans cet appel, que nous ne considérons nous-mêmes que comme un premier pas dans la nouvelle voie. A tous les représentants de l'art, à tous ses amis et défenseurs qui ne peuvent manquer de comprendre la nécessité du présent appel, nous demandons d'élever la voix immédiatement. Nous adressons la même injonction à toutes les publications indépendantes de gauche qui sont prêtes à prendre part à la créations de la Fédération internationale et à l'examen de ses tâches et méthodes d'action.

Lorsqu'un premier contact international aura été établi par la presse et la correspondance, nous procéderons à l'organisation de modestes congrès locaux et nationaux. A l'étape suivante devra se réunir un congrès mondial qui consacrera officiellement la fondation de la Fédération internationale.

Ce que nous voulons:

l'indépendance de l'art -- pour la révolution;
la révolution -- pour la libération définitive de l'art.⁷⁹

The document was produced during the Bretons' visit to Mexico, where they were guests of muralist Diego Rivera and his wife, Frida Kahlo (1910-1954), also a painter -- both of whom are discussed in Breton's Le Surréalisme et la peinture.⁸⁰ The document's major aim was to celebrate "the very idea of genuine creative autonomy," one which seemed to be losing ground on all sides. As partisan Franklin Rosemont explains,

the idea...was being menaced on all sides, art being regarded by Stalinists and fascists alike as a mere appendage to state propaganda. Yet, strange as it may seem now, legions of intellectuals were aligning themselves directly or indirectly with one or the other of these

worldwide antiproletarian tendencies. Opting for Stalinism were Hemingway, Dos Passos, Neruda, Vallejo, Léger, Malraux, Aragon and Tzara; adjusting to fascism were Eliot, Pound, Dali, Lawrence, Céline, Heidegger, Jung and Marinetti, with almost all the rest of the Italian futurists.⁸¹

Literary historian, George Watson, in his chapter "Did Stalin Dupe the Intellectuals?", comments on the gross misreading of the Soviet purges (and the Soviet view of art and letters) by British intellectuals in the thirties. Though his book, Politics and Literature in Modern Britain, applies only to British writers and intellectuals, his comments echo the much earlier fears of Trotsky, Breton and Rivera in the above document. He says:

The Stalinist intellectuals of the Thirties are nowadays something of a joke . . . The literary evidence does not bear out the myths of innocence and self-deception. It plainly suggests that poets and novelists in that age were attracted to the most violent system on earth because they knew that it was that.

Watson is not generous to that generation. He continues:

Between 1930 and 1939 many, and perhaps most, British intellectuals under the age of fifty, and a good many in other Western lands, knowingly supported what may well have been the greatest act of mass murder in European history.

Even the accusing eye of the historian is bound to flicker in the bright light of that assertion, and wish the evidence less good than it is.⁸²

According to Trotsky, the aim of F.I.A.R.I. was to "provide something of a moral or political 'resort' for the disappointed intellectuals"⁸³ who were left over, so to speak. Even though the organization itself failed, it represents an ongoing problem in literary history and the sociology of literature. As Franklin Rosemont says:

A remarkable convergence of surrealism and communism, the Breton/Trotsky manifesto remains an excellent summary of the problems involving the interrelationships of individual creative activity and social revolution.⁸⁴

This thesis is more thoroughly flushed out in F.E.J. Drikkoningen's pamphlet, Dichtertaal en revolutie. Breton pro en contra Trotsky, in which the rapport between poetic language and social revolution is explored. Drikkoningen concludes that there are certain sympathies between the two men, but also that for Trotsky "social revolution" is not accomplished wholly by a cultural revolution.⁸² The real difference herein is the source of constant misinterpretation of the word "revolution" in the letters, and among groups of writers of different political persuasions. Revolution was not synonymous with liberation: revolution was meant to bring liberation, which would include -- even simultaneously -- a liberation of the human spirit and its expression in works of art and literature.

Trotsky and Breton could agree equivocally on the idea of the "independence of the artist" -- as could many other artists and writers of the time. Trotsky sounds religious and mystical in his discussion of the role of "truth" in art. In this 1938 letter to Breton, he says:

The struggle for revolutionary ideas in art must begin once again with the struggle for artistic truth, not in terms of any single school, but in terms of the immutable faith of the artist in his own inner self. Without this there is not art. "You shall not lie." -- that is the formula of salvation.⁸⁶

Louis Janover has identified this idea about the independence of the artist with a more general concept of revolt, a rejection, at least, of "l'ordre établi." Breton is not alone in this, and he names other writers who manifest what he calls "une impulsion éthique": Büchner, Rimbaud, Marx, Blanqui, Flora Tristan, Jules Andrieu, etc. He continues by saying that no matter how divergent their views, they all converge in the same end: "la préservation des privilèges que leur apporte leur fonction d'intellectuel."⁸⁷ With this Trotsky could agree.

There is no doubt that Trotsky and Breton were linked by their sincere interest in this idea of the independence of the artist, and about it many

manifestoes and letters were written. But something else, I think, kept the correspondence going that had little to do with this intellectual comradeship. Initially Breton's admiration for Trotsky -- "[sa] pensée [et sa] vie" -- led him unabashedly to admit it in letters, and also led to Trotsky's embarrassment. Trotsky could not have been too embarrassed, however, since he did always reply to Breton's mail, and he did so warmly. The serious correspondence with Trotsky begins 9 August 1938, and it is presumably written on board a ship -- the stationery is marked with the logo of the "Hamburg-Amerika Linie." Though in his second paragraph Breton says he must not bother Trotsky with his "explications sentimentales," he is unrestrained in his first. He begins "Très cher Leon Davidovitch," and then says:

L'assurance me manque beaucoup moins pour vous appeler ainsi, alors que je ne suis plus en votre présence. Pourtant j'ai souvent désiré le faire et, si je vous le dis, c'est pour que vous mesuriez l'inhibition dont j'ai été victime, chaque fois qu'il s'est agi de tenter quelque chose dans votre direction et sous vos yeux. Cette inhibition relève avant tout, je voudrais à tout prix vous le faire comprendre, de l'admiration sans bornes que je vous porte; elle n'en a été, ces derniers temps, que le revers. Bien souvent, ainsi, je me suis demandé de qu'il adviendrait si, par impossible, je me trouvais en face d'un de ces hommes sur lesquels j'ai été amené à modeler ma pensée et ma sensibilité: disons par exemple Rimbaud ou Lautréamont. Je me sentais tout à coup étrangement privé de moyens, . . . C'est ce que j'appelle pour moi-même, en souvenir du Roi Lear, mon "complexe de Cordelia": ne vous moquez pas, c'est tout à fait foncier, organique, j'ai tout lieu de croire indéracimable (?). Vous êtes . . . un de ces hommes, peut-être aussi -- je ne suis pas sûr à cause de Freud -- le seul vivant (369).

Breton explains further how his admiration for this, the only living man of any merit in his life, came to be. Breton read Trotsky's work:

Je l'éprouvais encore, à l'evidence, sur ce bateau tout en relisant votre "Histoire de la Révolution russe."

He goes on to say that it is an impressive work on its own, but that all the more so when one considers the conditions under which it was written, and "la manière

unique" of which Trotsky is always capable (369). Breton says that Trotsky brings realistic and exact solutions to all problems, and that his style matches his purpose.

Breton's passion for Trotsky in this letter is consistent with Jacqueline Lamba's memory of Breton's attitude toward the revolutionary. Lamba was Breton's second wife (Breton was married to Simone Kahn until 1928), and accompanied him on his "mission culturelle au Mexique." Arturo Schwartz interviewed Lamba in 1974. Lamba corresponded with Trotsky herself (4 November 1938),⁸⁸ and was good friends with Rivera and Kahlo. In her letter she reports on Breton's correspondence with Partisan Review, developments among the French "comrades" (i.e. André Gide), and meetings at which Breton presided. Schwartz asked Lamba what were Breton's impressions of his conversations with Trotsky. She answered that:

Il en discutait passionnément. Ce qui le frappait le plus et sur quoi il revenait souvent était lié au côté humain qu'il avait vu au départ: une extraordinaire et immédiate disponibilité d'esprit, sur les petites choses aussi bien qui étaient chaque fois prétexte à des commentaires pénétrants . . .⁸⁹

When questioned further, she said that the two men were bound by something more than a "communion d'idées." They

s'étonnaient l'un l'autre par une commune pureté, passion et rigueur au service d'une curiosité intérieure illimitée . . . Ils s'y plaisaient profondément.⁹⁰

And she says their friendship continued in spite of differences, "malgré les divergences."⁹¹

Certainly it continued on the basis of the question of art and particularly revolutionary art. When Breton's praise and passion for Trotsky has been expressed in the 9 August 1938 letter (369), he then goes on to discuss the Manifeste and the idea of revolutionary art. He mentions Pierre Naville, surrealist painter and disciple of Trotsky in Paris, and Van (van Heijenoort), who had been in Paris before

going to Mexico to become Trotsky's secretary. Breton describes the tenor of the artistic community during the late twenties. He writes:

Puis-je vous prier, toutefois, de ne pas me laisser manquer de vos instructions à l'avenir [?] Considérant, par exemple, ce manifeste sur l'art, je me persuade que, s'il avait existé quelque années plutôt, il eût été de force à prévenir un certain nombre de glissements que j'ai vu se produire autour de moi. Durant des années, particulièrement de 1926 à 1931, je sais beaucoup d'écrivains et d'artistes qui n'ont cessé d'être en quête d'indications venant de vous. C'est, je crois pouvoir l'affirmer, dans la profonde ignorance de ce que vous jugiez acceptable et indispensable sur le plan de l'art révolutionnaire qu'on a pu commencer à enregistrer de leur part, sur un plan beaucoup plus étendu, de l'apathie ou, pis encore, les premiers symptômes de l'opportunisme et du cynisme que les organisations "culturelles" d'inspiration stalinienne ont généralisés (369).

Breton then refers to some disagreements between Naville and Trotsky that he wishes he could help to resolve. He vouches for Jean van Heijenoort as a person who knows the Surrealists best, and "pour qui j'ai la plus grande affection." Indeed, van Heijenoort was responsible for much of the correspondence with the Surrealists on Trotsky's behalf and he was familiar with their work. Breton had every reason to trust him and his advice.

Trotsky responds to Breton's letter on 31 August 1938, first commenting on his embarrassment at Breton's admiration, and his consequent concern for their future relationship.

Je suis sincèrement touché par le ton si amical et si chaleureux de votre lettre, cher ami, et dois-je le dire? un peu gêné. Vos éloges me semblent, en toute sincérité, si exagérés que je deviens un peu inquiet sur l'avenir de nos relations. (7428)

At this time Trotsky also describes what he perceives as an improving relationship between him and the editors of Partisan Review, again affirming the triangle of communications between Mexico, Paris and New York. He says:

Aux États-Unis les choses paraissent marcher beaucoup mieux. Je vous envoie la copie de la lettre que j'ai reçu à ce sujet de Dwight Macdonald. Je vous envoie d'ailleurs la copie de toute ma correspondance avec Partisan Review, ce qui peut peut-être vous

intéresser vous et vos collaborateurs en vue de votre projet de revue. La rédaction de Partisan Review a fait une évolution vers nous assez marqué (7428).

Important to Trotsky is the fact that "Dwight Macdonald écrit même systématiquement dans la New International," the American Trotskyist publication. But, as we might expect, he cautions Breton on the politics of the magazine:

Leur . . . revue reste trop neutre, trop décolorée, trop contemplative. Sur le plan politique. . . Il y a à mes yeux une grande leçon à tirer de ce fait. Si l'on veut se faire entendre à notre époque, il faut parler à haute voix et non chuchoter (7428).

The question of "le plan de l'art révolutionnaire" is crucial to our understanding of the Breton-Trotsky correspondence. It is the controlling idea of the letters, the theme of the manifestoes, and the attraction of both Breton and the editors of Partisan Review to Trotsky. The documents which we have read attest to the importance of this question for Breton in the final three years of the decade, and especially after meeting "The Old Man," Leon Trotsky.

Though, from our point of view, the most important of these is the published Pour un Art..., another unpublished document exists which might have been Breton's rough draft for Pour un Art... . It is unmistakably in Breton's hand, and on the same theme.⁹² It was found in the restricted section of Trotsky's Archives, in that part of the collection entitled "Other Compositions." The archivists have dated it 1937, but I think it would be more accurate to date it 1938. (In fact, it well fits van Heijenoort's account of a similar document described in With Trotsky in Exile, which would have us date the document around July, 1938).⁹³

The document to which I refer is titled (by the archivists?), "Art and Revolution." It is obviously a draft paper because Breton has made many revisions in the document, crossing out certain lines, and inserting others.⁹⁴ Because

Breton's hand is so tiny, parts of the document are difficult (or impossible) to read.⁹⁵

"Art and Revolution" could well have been the document which Breton presented to Trotsky, and which, then, the two men revised. This would correspond to van Heijenoort's memory of the discussions which took place in 1938 at Coyoacan about "art and revolution."⁹⁶ Van Heijenoort says, first, "Trotsky began to press Breton for the draft of the manifesto" (this would have been in early summer 1938, during Breton's trip to Mexico). Shortly after a trip the two men, and others, made to Pátzcuaro in Mexico in early July, Breton "gave Trotsky a few sheets of paper, covered with his tiny handwriting."⁹⁷ "Art and Revolution" is probably those few sheets of paper. It is said that Breton wrote a bit more than half of the manifesto, Trotsky a bit less.⁹⁸ Comparing the two texts, this would seem accurate. Twelve of the thirteen paragraphs in Breton's original document appear in some form in the final Pour un art.... His first paragraph does not appear. Eight new paragraphs are inserted at different intervals in the text, as revealed by the presentation to follow, where the texts are placed side by side. These eight paragraphs would be the "few pages" Trotsky dictated in Russian,⁹⁹ which van Heijenoort then translated into French. As mentioned before, van Heijenoort says that

after more talk, Trotsky took all of the texts, cut them, added a few passages, and pasted everything into a long role.... This was the text on which they reached final agreement. Whoever reads it can, from the language, unerringly recognize the paragraphs written by Trotsky and those written by Breton.¹⁰⁰

Is it possible that Trotsky's alleged additions, the eight new paragraphs, are recognizably different in style -- as van Heijenoort maintains -- from the other eight? Let us take a look at the two texts side by side. The paragraphs are numbered, the first paragraph of the published document being number one. Thus

similar paragraphs will have the same number; paragraphs which appear only in the unpublished draft will have no number (there is only one paragraph that does not appear, and it is lettered (a)); and, finally, when no paragraph can be found to correspond to the published paragraph, a space will be left corresponding to it, as in, for example, paragraph 1 itself.

PARALLEL TEXTS

**POUR UN ART
RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE
INDÉPENDANT**
(Published)

"ART AND REVOLUTION"
Trotsky's Archives
(Unpublished)

- 1) On peut prétendre sans exagération que jamais la civilisation humaine n'a été menacée de tant de dangers qu'aujourd'hui. Les vandales, à l'aide de leurs moyens barbares, c'est-à-dire fort précaires, détruisirent la civilisation antique dans un coin limité de l'Europe. Actuellement, c'est toute la civilisation mondiale, dans l'unité de son destin historique, qui chancelle sous la menace de forces réactionnaires armées de toute la technique moderne. Nous n'avons pas seulement en vue la guerre qui s'approche. Dès maintenant, en temps de paix, la situation de la science et de l'art est devenue absolument intolérable.

- 2) En ce qu'elle garde d'individuel dans sa genèse, en ce qu'elle met en oeuvre de qualités subjectives pour dégager un certain fait qui entraîne un enrichissement objectif, une découverte philosophique, sociologique, scientifique ou artistique apparaît comme le fruit d'un hasard précieux, c'est-à-dire comme une

a) L'analyse des superstructures idéologiques, qui permet, en dernière instance, de ne voir dans certaines d'entre elles (la religion, la morale) que le reflet pur et simple des conditions économiques de la vie, laisse subsister comme partiellement irréductibles à cette dernière donnée trois facteurs, qui contribuent pour une part autonome à la modification progressive de la société. Il s'agit de l'art, de la science et de la poursuite de l'idéal social sous sa forme la plus élevée. Certes ces trois domaines ne peuvent aucunement prétendre se soustraire à l'emprise de la puissance prépondérante qui revient, en fin de compte, au développement économique. Mais en eux trouvent à se traduire des aspirations distinctes, fondamentales, capables de réagir sur la base de la nécessité matérielle et de fournir certains éléments complémentaires d'appréciation. Toute autre conception historique verserait inévitablement dans le fatalisme.

- 2) En ce qu'elle garde d'individuel dans sa genèse, en ce qu'elle met en oeuvre de qualités subjectives pour dégager un certain fait qui entraîne un enrichissement objectif, une découverte philosophique, sociologique, scientifique ou artistique apparaît comme le fruit d'un hasard précieux, c'est-à-dire comme une

manifestation plus ou moins spontanée de la nécessité. On ne saurait négliger un tel apport, tant du point de vue de la connaissance générale (qui tend à ce que se poursuive l'interprétation du monde) que du point de vue révolutionnaire (qui, pour parvenir à la transformation du monde, exige qu'on se fasse une idée exacte des lois qui régissent son mouvement). Plus particulièrement, on ne saurait se désintéresser des conditions mentales dans lesquelles cet apport continue à se produire et, pour cela, ne pas veiller à ce que soit garanti le respect des lois spécifiques auxquelles est astreinte la création intellectuelle.

- 3) Or le monde actuel nous oblige à constater la violation de plus en plus générale de ces lois, violation à laquelle répond nécessairement un avilissement de plus en plus manifeste, non seulement de l'oeuvre d'art, mais encore de la personnalité "artistique". Le fascisme hitlérien, après avoir éliminé d'Allemagne tous les artistes chez qui s'était exprimé à quelque degré l'amour de la liberté, ne fût-ce que formelle, a astreint ceux qui pouvaient encore consentir à tenir une plume ou un pinceau à se faire les valets du régime et à le célébrer par order, dans les limites extérieures de la pire convention. A la publi-

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- 4) Il va sans dire que nous ne nous solidarisons pas un instant, quelle que soit sa fortune actuelle, avec le mot d'ordre: "Ni fascisme ni communisme!", qui répond à la nature du philistin conservateur et effrayé, s'accrochant aux vestiges du passé "démocratique". L'art véritable, c'est-à-dire celui qui ne se contente pas de variations sur des modèles tout faits mais s'efforce de donner une expression aux besoins intérieurs de l'homme et de l'humanité d'aujourd'hui, ne peut pas ne pas être révolutionnaire, c'est-à-dire ne pas aspirer à une reconstruction complète et radicale de la société, ne serait-ce que pour affranchir la création intellectuelle des chaînes qui l'entravent et permettre à toute l'humanité de s'élever à des hauteurs que seuls des génies isolés ont atteintes dans le passé. En même temps, nous reconnaissons que seule la révolution sociale peut frayer la voie à une nouvelle culture. Si, cependant, nous rejetons toute solidarité avec la caste actuellement dirigeante en U.R.S.S., c'est précisément parce qu'à nos yeux elle ne représente pas le communisme, mais en est l'ennemi le plus perfide et le plus dangereux.

- 5) Sous l'influence du régime totalitaire de l'U.R.S.S. et par l'inter-

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médiaire des organismes dits "culturels" qu'elle contrôle dans les autres pays, s'est étendu sur le monde entier un profond crépuscule hostile à l'émergence de toute espèce de valeur spirituelle. Crépuscule de boue et de sang dans lequel, déguisés en intellectuels et en artistes, trempent des hommes qui se sont fait de la servilité un ressort, du reniement de leurs propres principes un jeu pervers, du faux témoignage vénal une habitude et de l'apologie du crime une jouissance. L'art officiel de l'époque stalinienne reflète avec une cruauté sans exemple dans l'histoire leurs efforts dérisoires pour donner le change et masquer leur véritable rôle mercenaire.

- 6) La sourde réprobation que suscite dans le monde artistique cette négation éhontée des principes auxquels l'art a toujours obéi et que des États même fondés sur l'esclavage ne se sont pas avisés de contester si totalement doit faire place à une condamnation implacable. L'opposition artistique est aujourd'hui une des forces qui peuvent utilement contribuer au discrédit et à la ruine des régimes sous lesquels s'abîme, en même temps que le droit pour la classe exploitée d'aspirer à un monde meilleur, tout sentiment de la grandeur et même de la dignité humaine.

- 7) La révolution communiste n'a pas la crainte de l'art. Elle sait qu'au terme des recherches qu'on peut

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faire porter sur la formation de la vocation artistique dans la société capitaliste qui s'écroule, la détermination de cette vocation ne peut passer que pour le résultat d'une collision entre l'homme et un certain nombre de formes sociales qui lui sont adverses. Cette seule conjoncture, au degré près de conscience qui reste à acquérir, fait de l'artiste son allié prédisposé. Le mécanisme de sublimation, qui intervient en pareil cas, et que la psychanalyse a mis en évidence, a pour objet de rétablir l'équilibre rompu entre le "moi" cohérent et les éléments refoulés. Ce rétablissement s'opère au profit de l'"idéal du moi" qui dresse contre la réalité présente, insupportable, les puissances du monde intérieur, du "soi", communes à tous les hommes et constamment en voie d'épanouissement dans le devenir. Le besoin d'émancipation de l'esprit n'a qu'à suivre son cours naturel pour être amené à se fondre et à se retremper dans cette nécessité primordiale: le besoin d'émancipation de l'homme.

- 8) Il s'ensuit que l'art ne peut consentir sans déchéance à se plier à aucune directive étrangère et à venir docilement remplir les cadres que certains croient pouvoir lui assigner, à des fins pragmatiques, extrêmement courtes. Mieux vaut se fier au don de préfiguration qui est l'apanage de tout artiste authentique, qui implique un commencement de résolu-

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commencement de résolution virtuel de résolution des contradictions les plus graves de son temps et oriente la pensée de ses contemporains vers l'urgence de l'établissement d'un ordre nouveau. Pour l'art, dit Marx, on sait que des périodes de floraison déterminées ne sont aucunement en rapport avec le développement général de la société, ni, par conséquent, avec la base matérielle, l'ossature, en quelque sorte, de son organisation.

- 9) L'idée que le jeune Marx s'était fait du rôle de l'écrivain exige, de nos jours, un rappel vigoureux. Il est clair que cette idée doit être étendue, sur le plan artistique et scientifique, aux diverses catégories de producteurs et de chercheurs. "L'écrivain, dit-il, doit naturellement gagner de l'argent pour pouvoir vivre et écrire, mais il ne doit en aucun cas vivre et écrire pour gagner de l'argent... L'écrivain ne considère aucunement ses travaux comme un moyen. Ils sont des buts en soi, ils sont si peu un moyen pour lui-même et pour les autres qu'il sacrifie au besoin son existence à leur existence... La première condition de la liberté de la presse consiste à ne pas être un métier. Il est plus que jamais de circonstance de brandir cette déclaration contre ceux qui prétendent assujettir l'activité intellectuelle à des fins extérieures à elle-même et, au mépris de toutes les déterminations historiques

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qui lui sont propres, régenter, en fonction de prétendues raisons d'État, les thèmes de l'art. Le libre choix de ces thèmes et la nonrestriction absolue en ce qui concerne le champ de son exploration constituent pour l'artiste un bien qu'il est en droit de revendiquer comme inaliénable. En matière de création artistique, il importe essentiellement que l'imagination échappe à toute contrainte, ne se laisse sous aucun prétexte imposer de filière. A ceux qui nous presseraient, que ce soit pour aujourd'hui ou pour demain, de consentir à ce que l'art soit soumis à une discipline que nous tenons pour radicalement incompatible avec ses moyens, nous opposons un refus sans appel et notre volonté délibérée de nous en tenir à la formule: toute licence en art.

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- 10) Nous reconnaissons, bien entendu, à l'État révolutionnaire le droit de se défendre contre la réaction bourgeoise agressive, même lorsqu'elle se couvre du drapeau de la science ou de l'art. Mais entre ces mesures imposées et temporaires d'auto-défense révolutionnaire et la

prétention d'exercer un commandement sur la création intellectuelle de la société, il y a un abîme. Si, pour le développement des forces productives matérielles, la révolution est tenue d'ériger un régime socialiste de plan centralisé, pour la création intellectuelle elle doit dès le début même établir et assurer un régime anarchiste de liberté individuelle. Aucune autorité, aucune contrainte, pas la moindre trace de commandement! Les diverses associations de savants et les groupes collectifs d'artistes qui travailleront à résoudre des tâches qui n'auront jamais été si grandioses peuvent surgir et déployer un travail fécond uniquement sur la base d'une libre amitié créatrice, sans la moindre contrainte de l'extérieur.

- 11) De ce qui vient d'être dit il découle clairement qu'en défendant la liberté de la création, nous n'entendons aucunement justifier l'indifférentisme politique et qu'il est loin de notre pensée de vouloir ressusciter un soi-disant art "pur" qui d'ordinaire sert les buts plus qu'impurs de la réaction. Non, nous avons une trop haute idée de la fonction de l'art pour lui refuser une influence sur le sort de la société. Nous estimons que la tâche suprême de l'art à notre époque est de participer consciemment et activement à la préparation de la révolution. Cependant, l'artiste ne peut servir la lutte émancipatrice que s'il

s'est pénétré subjectivement de son contenu social et individuel, que s'il en a fait passer le sens et le drame dans ses nerfs et que s'il cherche librement à donner une incarnation artistique à son monde intérieur.

- 12) Dans la période présente, caractérisée par l'agonie du capitalisme, tant démocratique que fasciste, l'artiste, sans même qu'il ait besoin de donner à sa dissidence sociale une forme manifeste, se voit menacé de la privation du droit de vivre et de continuer son oeuvre par le retrait devant celle-ci de tous les moyens de diffusion. Il est naturel qu'il se tourne alors vers les organisations stalinistes qui lui offrent la possibilité d'échapper à son isolement. Mais la renonciation de sa part à tout ce qui peut constituer son message propre et les complaisances terriblement dégradantes que ces organisations exigent de lui en échange de certains avantages matériels lui interdisent de s'y maintenir, pour peu que la démoralisation soit impuissante à avoir raison de son caractère. Il faut, dès cet instant, qu'il comprenne que sa place est ailleurs, non pas parmi ceux qui trahissent la cause de la révolution en même temps, nécessairement, que la cause de l'homme, mais parmi ceux qui témoignent de leur fidélité inébranlable aux principes de cette révolution, parmi ceux qui, de ce fait, restent seuls qualifiés pour l'aider à s'accomplir et pour assurer par elle la libre expression

- 12) Dans la période présente, caractérisée par l'agonie du capitalisme, l'artiste, sans même qu'il donne à sa dissidence sociale une forme manifeste, se voit menacé de la privation du droit de vivre ((?)) et de continuer son oeuvre par le retrait devant celle-ci de tous les moyens de diffusion. Il est naturel qu'il se tourne alors vers...les organisations staliniennes qui lui offrent la le moyen d'échapper à son isolement....mais la renonciation, de sa part, à tout ce qui peut constituer son message propre et les complaisances que ces organisations exigent de lui en échange de quelques possibilités matérielles lui interdisent de s'y maintenir, pour peu que la démocratisation soit impuissante à avoir raison de son caractère. Il faut, dès cet instant, qu'il comprenne que sa place est ailleurs, non pas parmi ceux qui trahissent ((?...à la fois la cour)) la cause de la Révolution en même temps, ((?)) que la cause de l'homme, mais parmi ceux qui témoignent de leur fidélité inébranlable aux principes de cette Révolution, parmi ceux qui, de ce fait, restent seuls ((?)) qualifiés pour l'aider à s'accomplir et pour assurer par elle...la libre expression ultérieure de tous les modes du génie humain.

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- 13) Le but du présent appel est de trouver un terrain pour réunir les tenants révolutionnaires de l'art, pour servir la révolution par les méthodes de l'art et défendre la liberté de l'art elle-même contre les usurpateurs de la révolution. Nous sommes profondément convaincus que la rencontre sur ce terrain est possible pour les représentants de tendances esthétiques, philosophiques et politiques passablement divergentes. Les marxistes peuvent marcher ici la main dans la main avec les anarchistes, à condition que les uns et les autres rompent implacablement avec l'esprit policier réactionnaire, qu'il soit représenté par Joseph Staline ou par son vassal Garcia Oliver.

- 14) Des milliers et des milliers de penseurs et d'artistes isolés, dont la voix est couverte par le tumulte odieux des falsificateurs enrégimentés, sont actuellement dispersés dans le monde. De nombreuses petites revues locales tentent de grouper autour d'elles des forces jeunes, qui cherchent des voies nouvelles, et non des subventions. Toute tendance progressive en art est flétrie par le fascisme comme une dégénérescence. Toute créations libre est déclarée fasciste par les stalinistes. L'art révolutionnaire indépendant doit se rassembler pour la lutte contre les persécutions réaction-

naires et proclamer hautement son droit à l'existence. Un tel rassemblement est le but de la Fédération internationale de l'art révolutionnaire indépendant (F.I.A.R.I.) que nous jugeons nécessaire de créer.

- 15) Nous n'avons nullement l'intention d'imposer chacune des idées contenues dans cet appel, que nous ne considérons nous-mêmes que comme un premier pas dans la nouvelle voie. A tous les représentants de l'art, à tous ses amis et défenseurs qui ne peuvent manquer de comprendre la nécessité du présent appel, nous demandons d'élever la voix immédiatement. Nous adressons la même injonction à toutes les publications indépendantes de gauche qui sont prêtes à prendre part à la créations de la Fédération internationale et à l'examen de ses tâches et méthodes d'action.

- 16) Lorsqu'un premier contact international aura été établi par la presse et la correspondance, nous procéderons à l'organisation de modestes congrès locaux et nationaux. A l'étape suivante devra se réunir un congrès mondial qui consacrera officiellement la fondation de la Fédération internationale.

Ce que nous voulons:

l'indépendance de l'art --
pour la révolution;
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Breton's Paragraph "a"

The first feature one notices about this paragraph is the prosaic style, the more complex sentences, the parenthetical thoughts. This is certainly different than, say, paragraphs 4, 10 and 11, or 13, 14, 15 and 16, which are more concise and terse. Second, one notices the content: this must be the most theoretical of all the paragraphs, and perhaps not as forthright an introduction as Trotsky would like. Its contents remind us of at least two major sources: Marx, and Trotsky (Literature and Revolution), and many modern Marxist and neo-Marxist literary critics and theorists.¹⁰¹ We find also in this paragraph (a) the concept of "translation": art translates aspirations of the people and is then able to influence the material base by reacting with it (*réagir sur*). Thus, it produces or furnishes "certains éléments complémentaires d'appréciation." Any other "historical conception," Breton says, is too fatalistic. Like Trotsky's idea of "permanent revolution," this view is essentially optimistic, and assumes, as classical Marxism does, that history must progress in the direction of continual revolution to achieve true liberation.¹⁰²

(Trotsky's) Paragraph 1

The first paragraph of the published document is very much Trotsky's "rough and ready" style. It describes the political climate in the world, the social decay, and the coming war. Under such conditions, art and science suffer. As Trotsky says in his introduction to Literature and Revolution, "Culture feeds on the sap of economics, and a material surplus is necessary, so that culture may grow, develop and become subtle."¹⁰³

(Breton's) Paragraphs 2 and 3

These paragraphs are metaphoric, and vary internally in style. Breton says here that art seems to be "le fruit d'un hasard précieux," a result of precious chance, and, also that it is almost paradoxically the manifestation, more or less spontaneous, "de la nécessité." He insists that we cannot remain indifferent to the conditions which affect creative activity, art and literature are ways of interpreting (therefore knowing) the world. At the same time, however, we must respect the laws which govern intellectual creation. This last line echoes Trotsky's ideas as they are presented in his essay on "The Formalist School," where he says, "A work of art should, in the first place, be judged by its own law, that is, by the law of art."¹⁰⁴ Breton then describes the demise of the "artistic" personality in the present condition, and compares Hitler's regime to "Thermidorian" reaction in the Soviet Union.

(Trotsky's) Paragraph 4

The style changes in this paragraph, and we are thrown into "the rough and ready" sentence of Trotsky, defending himself against this and that, and chastising his opponents. But it also states one of his basic premises about the "natural" revolutionary impetus in art. He says art "ne peut pas ne pas être révolutionnaire." Art must, however, liberate itself from the present, from "des chaînes" which fetter all of humankind, and not just individual artists. For these new times, a new art and culture are needed. Trotsky's political message is clear. He concludes by saying that solidarity with the Soviet Union is impossible because it does not represent communism, but "l'ennemi le plus perfide et le plus dangereux." The reasons for this are given in the next paragraph.

(Breton's) Paragraph 5

This paragraph is straightforward, though it is interesting that a few changes are made in the original copy to produce the published copy. One legible example: Breton has struck out the word "véritable" and put in its place "profond." H.W. Fowler would approve of the change, the former being almost hyperbolic. Breton condemns "the official art of Stalinism," using metaphors that Trotsky himself might have used (such as "crépuscule de boue et de sang...") so perhaps there was more collaboration on this paragraph than we expect.

Paragraph 6

This paragraph is also straightforward. It is a call to action: the opposition of writers and artists to regimes such as the U.S.S.R. plays its part in restoring "tout sentiment de la grandeur et même de la dignité humaine." Breton's handwritten text includes a number of insertions in it, not least of which is the right of "la classe exploitée," and not just of artists, to aspire to a better world.

(Breton's) Paragraph 7

There is one minor difference between the two texts of paragraph seven. Breton originally used the word "incessamment" to describe the nature of the "flowering" of man's self ("id"). The published document uses the word "constamment." The first means incessantly or unceasingly, whereas the second means "with constancy," or continually. The paragraph could not have been written by Trotsky because he did not know this much about Freudian concepts and their role in aesthetics, whereas Breton and the Surrealists were at one time committed to psychoanalysis as a way of seeing the world more creatively. Freud's ideas are used here to corroborate the theory that art, or the artist, almost "naturally" strives for his own liberation (emancipation) through his own expressions of self.

(This is parallel to Trotsky's theory of history.) He explains that the process of "sublimation" encourages the artist to repair the disequilibrium between his internal "ego" and the "formes sociales qui lui sont adverses." In Marxist terms, he tries to repair the "contradiction," a word which comes from the Latin word contradicere, literally, "to speak against." The law of contradiction is central to Hegel's dialectical logic: "contradiction is the driving force in all things,"¹⁰⁵ and is central to both the theories of psychoanalysis and the philosophy of Marxism. This is why the "communist revolution" is not afraid of art.

Paragraphs 8 and 9

In Breton's original document these paragraphs were amalgamated into one. In the final published document, the first paragraph is made up of two sections from Breton's document, and the middle part has been expanded into a new, larger paragraph (probably with Trotsky's influence), Paragraph 9, the main thesis of the document. It contains some of the main tenets of the artists who came under Trotsky's influence in the thirties: first, freedom of the press is not a business activity, a "métier." The writer does not write in order to make money. Second, the artist requires, by virtue of the very nature of his activity, full freedom of choice in his work, so that themes cannot be dictated to him even for "reasons of state." To recall Friedrich Engels' letter to Minna Kautsky, 26 November 1885, Engels says he does not oppose tendentious literature, but, he says "the tendency must spring forth from the situation and the action itself, without explicit attention called to it." Engels believes that the writer is in no way "obliged" to resolve "social conflicts he depicts."¹⁰⁶ As Raymond Williams has explained in his book Marxism and Literature, the assumption among non-dogmatic Marxists is that "real social relations are deeply embedded within the practice of writing itself, as

well as within the relations within which writing is read.¹⁰⁷ This notion in particular is avoided by the proponents of "socialist realism," who would condemn all "modernist" [and surrealist] art as "formalist, abstract, passive and therefore objectively counter-revolutionary."¹⁰⁸ Third, the slogan which the surrealists and the editors of Partisan Review share: toute licence en art, total freedom for art. It is interesting to note here that Breton's original slogan had a condition attached to it, which Trotsky must have omitted: "Toute licence en art, sauf contre la révolution prolétarienne." The condition is that art can be free as long as it does not work against the proletarian revolution. Instead, Trotsky probably decided to leave the slogan open, and speak to the "political" condition in the next two paragraphs, not included in Breton's original document.

(Trotsky's) Paragraphs 10 and 11

Trotsky defends his 1925 position that the "revolutionary state" has the right to defend itself against "la réaction bourgeoise agressive," even when it appears under the banner of science or art. But he calls this right a "temporary" measure of self-defense, and not a "command" for a certain kind of art, be it proletarian or otherwise. In Literature and Revolution he specifies: "complete freedom of self-determination in the field of art, after putting before them (artists) the categorical standard of being for or against the Revolution."¹⁰⁹ He insists that good art can only exist in an atmosphere free from constraints, but in the next paragraph he quickly adds that this does not mean one should justify political indifference. The "supreme task" of art is indeed to prepare for the revolution, but, the document continues, the artist must subjectively "donner une incarnation artistique à son monde intérieur." The paragraph would have us believe, I think, that the relationship between art and revolution is dialectical, and must be determined by a process in which both the artist and his world meld.

Paragraph 12

This paragraph cautions the well-intentioned (but threatened) artist against the "Stalinist organizations" which offer the hope of salvation from alienation. Artists cannot betray the revolution, or mankind, by abandoning, ultimately, "la libre expression ultérieure."

Paragraphs 13, 14, 15 and 16

The final paragraphs in the document do not appear in any form in Breton's original text, so probably Trotsky wrote them himself. They are political in nature, and call for 1) unity among artists, philosophers and political activists (both Marxists and anarchists can march together!), 2) rejection of the reactionary police spirit of Stalin and his henchman, Garcia Oliver, 3) defense of the little magazine industry and isolated artists, all of whom, all over the world, are being wrongly labelled "decadent" by the fascists and by Stalin, and 4) a union of progressive artists and their magazines in the International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Art (F.I.A.R.I.). The document insists that F.I.A.R.I. is just taking the first step in "preliminary international contact." When it has become more established through the press, and interestingly enough, through "correspondence," congresses will be established. It hoped for a world congress, which never came to be.

To reiterate the dialectical nature of art and revolution, and the need for "freedom" to foster this relationship, it declares its aims:

The independence of art -- for the revolution:

The revolution -- for the complete liberation of art!

These documents appeared at the height of the Trotsky-Breton correspondence, and represent: a) the degree to which Breton's view of art and culture was modelled after Trotsky's views and his direct input into the final drafting of Pour une art...; b) the power of the notion -- also adopted by the revised Partisan Review -- that art must be "free" from external restraints and prescriptions (such as "Socialist Realism"); c) the unorthodox aesthetic assumption (among Communists at the time) that all (good) art operates according to its own laws, and d) the reciprocal relationship between "revolution" and artistic licence, even under capitalism, must be protected by Marxists all over the world (hence, the organization F.I.A.R.I. adopted the manifesto).

Notwithstanding the importance of F.I.A.R.I. within the context of the late thirties, F.I.A.R.I. did not grow into the mass cultural organization that Trotsky had envisioned. The French section of the organization published two issues of a bulletin titled Clé, but war spread across Europe in 1938-9, contributing to the demise of the bulletin and most of the European sections of F.I.A.R.I. Egypt's Art and Liberty group was the longest-lived of the F.I.A.R.I. affiliates, publishing pamphlets and organizing exhibits during the war.¹¹⁰ But this was the exception and not the rule. Dwight Macdonald's December 19, 1938 letter to Trotsky describes the sad progress of the F.I.A.R.I. "plan" in New York:

I am sorry that I can report, in answer to your inquiry, no progress on the F.I.A.R.I. in this country. As you know, we printed the manifesto in full in our Fall issue, together with a prominently placed editorial stating our adherence to its principles and inviting every one interested in forming such a group to communicate with us. That was over a month ago. To date, we have received just three communications on the subject. This seems to us a most discouraging response. We have also sounded out certain individuals, but with little more success. However, we plan within the next month to invite some twenty or thirty writers and artists to meet with us for the purpose of deciding whether it is worth forming such an organization in this country, and, if so, just what form it should take. We will, of course, at once let Messrs. Rivera and Breton know the results of this meeting (2843).

The war made it physically impossible for F.I.A.R.I. to grow, but there were also other reasons for its demise. Sections within the organization could agree on the political principles adopted by the Trotsky-Breton Manifesto, but they could not always agree internally about aesthetic principles. Rosemont hints at the problem in his "Introduction" to the Breton Writings when he says that the success of F.I.A.R.I. tactically "involved some concession by the surrealists to those who still thought of themselves as 'artists' in the old sense."¹¹¹ Jean van Heijenoort has confirmed that the differences between the New Yorkers and the Surrealists in terms of their views of the art object were insurmountable.¹¹² Moreover, Trotsky's tastes offered no solution to the problem. Breton was contemptuous of the modern novel; Partisan Review was immersed in it. Trotsky was suspicious of surrealism; and yet found many of his supporters in its ranks. Trotsky's tastes were conservative, preferring as he did Balzac, Dickens and Louis-Ferdinand Céline to Benjamin Péret, André Breton and the anti-mimetic Surrealists and avant-gardists. Partisan Review was much closer to mimesis, although it tolerated and, after 1937, encouraged "experiment" in art. These contradictions between form and function, taste and principle, were too difficult to overcome during the already difficult war years.

If enough Marxist intellectuals and artists had adopted the F.I.A.R.I. "guidelines" for good, and committed, art, perhaps a consistent base of practicing writers and critics would have been established. Although we cannot measure the exact influence of these guidelines on modern cultural movements, we can draw some conclusions about the character of their ideas when placed in the larger context of Marxist aesthetics and comparisons made between the Surrealists and Partisan Review in the late thirties. As James Burkhart Gilbert recognized in spite of the short life of F.I.A.R.I., the activity of 1938 "went beyond politics." The

conjunction, he continues, "of Breton, Trotsky, and the Partisan Review implied much more than an alliance against Stalinism."¹¹³

Notes

- ¹Patrick Waldberg, Surrealism (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), p. 11.
- ²Manifestes du surréalisme (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), pp. 37-8.
- ³Waldberg, p. 11.
- ⁴Surrealism and Dadaism, trans. Stephen Crawshaw (Oxford: Pahidon, 1979), p. 15.
- ⁵Waldberg, p. 13.
- ⁶*Ibid.*, p. 105.
- ⁷Calas, Nicolas, Herbert J. Miller and Kenneth Burke, Surrealism: Pro and Con (N.Y.: Botham Book Mart, 1973), p. 20. This quotation is excerpted from the Breton entry in the "Surrealist Pocket Dictionary," pp. 19-30.
- ⁸For details of individual contributions to the magazine, see Marguerite Bonnet's thorough listings in André Breton: Naissance de l'aventure surréaliste (Paris: José Corti, 1975), pp. 418-9 and pp. 428-32.
- ⁹Waldberg maintains Soupault's exclusion, p. 112; Franklin Rosemont, André Breton: What is Surrealism? (N.Y.: Pathfinder, 1978), is the source for the 1927 date (p. 394). For details of the "Aragon Affair" there are many sources, but one of the most up-to-date is by C.G. Geoghegan "Surrealism and Communism: The Hesitations of Aragon from Kharkov to the 'Affair Front Rouge,'" Journal of European Studies (1978), 12-33. For a comprehensive and more personal view, see André Thirion, Révolutionnaires sans révolution (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1972), pp. 294-326.
- ¹⁰Waldberg says Breton visited Freud in 1921, p. 113. For the quotation, see Rosemont, p. 365, Surrealist Glossary.
- ¹¹See, for example, Anna Balakian, Surrealism: the Road to the Absolute (N.Y.: E.P. Dutton, 1970), pp. 125-6.
- ¹²(Paris: Éditions des Cahiers libres, 1932).
- ¹³p. 20.
- ¹⁴The Surrealist Revolution in France (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan, 1961), p. 82.
- ¹⁵Marguerite Bonnet, "André Breton and the Surrealist Movement," International Socialist Review (March 1975), p. 29.
- ¹⁶15 October 1925 (No. 5), pp. 30-31.

¹⁷This was a Belgian Surrealist review edited by Camille Goemans and Paul Nougé.

¹⁸p. 29. Lenin had died in January of 1924.

¹⁹Short, "The Politics of Surrealism: 1920-1936," The Journal of Contemporary History (1966), 6-7.

²⁰Bonnet, "André Breton and the Surrealist Movement," p. 29. For more details on the relationship between the French Surrealists and the French Communist Party, see Jean-Pierre Bernard, "Communisme et Littératures: Le Parti Communiste français et les problèmes littéraires 1921-1939," (Ph.D. diss., University of Paris, 1940). For details of the major desertions or expulsions from the P.C.F. in this period see David Cauté, Communism and the French Intellectuals: 1914-1960, (London, Andre Deutsch, 1964), pp. 86-92.

²¹André Breton et les données fondamentales du Surréalisme, (Paris: Gallimard, 1950), pp. 1-5.

²²Carrouges, p. 101.

²³Carrouges, pp. 105-6 and The Letters of John Keats: 1814-1821, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, Volume One (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), p. 193.

²⁴Herbert S. Gershman, The Surrealist Revolution in France, (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1969), p. 54.

²⁵Ibid., p. 145.

²⁶Isaac Deutscher, ed., The Age of Permanent Revolution, (N.Y.: Dell, 1964), p. 11. See also Deutscher's The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky 1921-1929, Volume II (N.Y.: Vintage, 1959), pp. 271-394, "The Decisive Contest: 1926-7."

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Bonnet, "André Breton and the Surrealist Movement," pp. 29-30; Breton, avec André Parinaud et al, Entretiens: 1913-1952 (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 124. Here Breton says that eventually he revoked the pamphlet out of "loyauté envers le parti."

²⁹Bonnet, p. 30.

³⁰Jack J. Roth, "The 'Revolution of the Mind': The Politics of Surrealism Reconsidered," South Atlantic Quarterly, (Spring 1977), 148; Gershman, p. 92, p. 223. Gershman suggests that not just Breton left the party. He refers to Entretiens, (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 127.

³¹pp. 22-4.

³²p. 1.

³³pp. 10-13.

³⁴p. 7.

³⁵pp. 16-17.

³⁶pp. 29-30.

³⁷Ibid., p. 30. Fourrier was, according to Gershman, "a cautious senior editor" of Clarté at the time this was written, p. 86.

³⁸Number 8, p. 7. The quotation is from Calas, Surrealist Pocket Dictionary, p. 28.

³⁹I assume the version in the review is a painting, even though a 1925 version of it is published in Waldberg, p. 33, and is described as "frottage on paper." This latter looks like it could have been a preliminary sketch for the former. It is not as strange or mythical.

⁴⁰pp. 8-9.

⁴¹p. 33.

⁴²p. 18.

⁴³Franklin Rosemont, ed., André Breton: What is Surrealism? Selected Writings (New York: Monad, 1978), p. 321.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 320.

⁴⁵Benjamin Péret, Vingt poèmes/Péret's Score, intro. and trans. J.H. Matthews, Passeport 10, (Paris: M.J. Minard aux lettres modernes, 1967), p. 7.

⁴⁶Gershman, p. 145.

⁴⁷Conversation with Jean van Heijenoort, 7 January 1980, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Mr. van Heijenoort suggested that Trotsky's tastes were "very traditional," and this was why he did not like Péret's work.

⁴⁸Waldberg, p. 107. See also Waldberg's translated edition of Desnos' surrealist text, "Death: The Oaken Rampart," in which he entrusts a "grotesque and ridiculous" funeral to his acquaintances, pp. 50-1. See also Rosemont, p. 364.

⁴⁹p. 18.

⁵⁰p. 11.

⁵¹Number 8, p. 31.

⁵²Rosemont, p. 31.

⁵³Gershman, p. 90.

⁵⁴Breton's comment is from Légitime défense, Point du jour, pp. 58-9. Quoted in Gershman, pp. 90-1.

⁵⁵Jack J. Roth, "The 'Revolution of the Mind': The Politics of Surrealism Reconsidered," South Atlantic Quarterly (Spring 1977), 153-7.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Janover, Surréalisme: art et politique (Paris: Galilée, 1980), p. 120 and p. 122.

⁵⁹See Anna Balakian, André Breton: Magus of Surrealism (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 160 and Mary Ann Caws, André Breton (New York: Twayne, 1971), pp. 19-20.

⁶⁰"André Breton and the Surrealist Movement," p. 30.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²Robert S. Short, p. 10

⁶³pp. 10-11.

⁶⁴Robert S. Short, p. 11. He cites Vus par un écrivain de l'URSS (Paris, 1934), pp. 55 and 64 as a source.

⁶⁵translated from the Russian by Samuel Putnam, pp. 11-16.

⁶⁶p. 11.

⁶⁷Caws, p. 16.

⁶⁸L'Imaculée conception (Paris: Seghers, 1961).

⁶⁹Histoire du surréalisme (Paris: Éditions du seuil, 1945), p. 187.

⁷⁰pp. 187-88.

⁷¹Rosemont, p. 78.

⁷²Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution (1930).

⁷³Roth, pp. 155-7.

⁷⁴See the essay, "Position politique de l'art d'aujourd'hui," presented to a conference in Prague in 1935, and reproduced in Position politique du surréalisme (Paris: Denoël, Gonthier, 1971), pp. 15-60.

⁷⁵Roth, pp. 155-6.

⁷⁶Theories of Literature in the Twentieth Century (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1977), p.115.

⁷⁷On Freud, Breton and Modern Marxist (literary) movements, see Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973). For evidence of Trotsky's "favourable" opinion of Freud, see Literature and Revolution, pp. 42-3. See pp. 3-4 of this thesis for more details of this.

⁷⁸See "Visite à Léon Trotsky" in La Clé des champs (Paris: Union Générale, 1967), p. 79.

⁷⁹Reproduced from André Breton, La Clé des champs, pp. 53-61.

⁸⁰Nouvelle édition et corrigée, 1928-1965. (Paris: Gallimard, 1967). See also the little-known catalogue to the first American exhibition of Kahlo's work by The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (New York: Museum of Contemporary Art and Hayden Herrera, 1978).

⁸¹André Breton: What is Surrealism?, p. 80.

⁸²(London: MacMillan, 1977), p. 70.

⁸³*Ibid.*, p. 81. See also Leon Trotsky, On Literature and Art (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), where Trotsky's notable letter to Breton is reproduced in full, pp. 122-24. Note also that it was reproduced in Partisan Review in Winter, 1939.

⁸⁴Rosemont, p. 81.

⁸⁵(Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Adolf M. Hakkert, 1974), pp. 17-8.

⁸⁶On Literature and Art, p. 124.

⁸⁷Surréalisme, art et politique (Paris: Galilée, 1980), p. 120.

⁸⁸See appendix (372) for a copy of the letter.

⁸⁹Lamba, Jacqueline, "La rencontre Trotsky-Breton," Les Lettres Nouvelles (September/ October 1975), 104.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁹¹*Ibid.*

⁹²For evidence of this, please compare this document (15892) to another written and signed by Breton, for instance (369), both of which are included in Appendix A.

⁹³With Trotsky in Exile (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978). See especially p. 125, and pp. 128-9. In a personal conversation, van Heijenoort has

said that a third version of the document exists. It has been kept by Jacqueline Breton, has not been published, and is not radically different from the versions printed here. Van Heijenoort told me this on May 16, 1983 in Edmonton, Alberta.

⁹⁴Examine the original (15892) and the transcribed, typewritten copies which follow for evidence of the markings and changes. Not all changes are included in the transcribed copy.

⁹⁵Prof. Colette Dimić and Prof. Milan V. Dimić helped to read and transcribe the tiny handwriting.

⁹⁶With Trotsky in Exile, p. 125 and pp. 128-9.

⁹⁷p. 125.

⁹⁸p. 128.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰If our hypothesis is correct and we do assume the handwritten document is Breton's first draft for the final published document, these paragraphs are numbered 1, 4, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16.

¹⁰¹Marx, the preface to The Critique of Political Economy (1859) and the much cited Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. See also the Marx-Engels correspondence for details of their notion of "relative autonomy" or "autotelicism" of the work of art in Marx and Engels on Literature and Art, ed. Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1973). A good summary of the contribution to the progressive transformation of society on the part of art (i.e. "counter-culture" or any of its variants) is contained in the rather unknown essay, by Willis H. Truitt and Sheila M. Meehan, "A Note on Revolutionary Art and Ideology," in Praxis (Winter 1976), pp. 81-90. It surveys the classical and post-modern theories of ideology, the term "unmasking," Brecht's methods of dramatic alienation, and later Marcuse's idea of liberation -- one that matches both Breton's and Trotsky's. For examples of ideological criticism using British novels as examples, see Terry Eagleton, "Ideology and Literary Form," New Left Review, (March, July 1975), 81-109.

¹⁰²See Duncan Hallas, Trotsky's Marxism for details of the theory of permanent revolution (London: Pluto Press, 1979), pp. 15-17.

¹⁰³p. 9. See also Raymond Williams' comprehensive study of the nature of "Base" and of "Superstructure" in his essay "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," New Left Review 82 (1973), pp. 3-16.

¹⁰⁴In Literature and Revolution, trans. Rose Strunsky (1925; rpt. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1975), p. 178.

¹⁰⁵Peter A. Angeles, Dictionary of Philosophy (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1981), pp. 155-6.

¹⁰⁶Marx and Engels on Literature and Art, ed. Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski (St. Louis, Missouri: Telos Press, 1973), p. 113. Engels' comments complement Marx's view that the writer's work is not a means but an end in itself. See Mikhail Lifshitz, The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx, trans. Ralph B. Winn (N.Y.: Pluto Press, 1933 and 1938), pp. 52-4.

¹⁰⁷(Oxford: Oxford Univ. Pres, 1977), p. 205.

¹⁰⁸David Cate, The Fellow Travellers: A Postscript to the Enlightenment (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 231.

¹⁰⁹Literature and Revolution, p. 14.

¹¹⁰Franklin Rosemont, "Introduction" to André Breton: What is Surrealism? (New York: Monad, 1978), p. 81.

¹¹¹p. 80.

¹¹²Prof. van Heijenoort insisted that these aesthetic differences had a lot to do with the inability of F.I.A.R.I. to develop along international lines during a conversation I had with him in Edmonton, Alberta, May 16, 1983.

¹¹³Writers and Partisans (New York: John Wiley, 1968), p. 201.

CHAPTER FOUR
CULTURAL POLITICS AND
THE LITERARY AVANT-GARDE:
TOWARDS A NEW MARXIST AESTHETIC

Most critics and students of artists of the 1930s have, to date, tended to view individual Surrealists and the surrealist movement, or Partisan Review as singular and separate entities. In part, we did not realize the extent to which they shared -- or inherited -- similar cultural or political principles and traditions. Until now, for example, we have not been privy to most of those letters in Trotsky's Archives, which point us toward a community of artists for whom politics and art intersected in a particular way. In order to assess this community, and establish the parameters of a potential new Marxist aesthetic, we must understand this community as a unit, held together by a shared intellectual tradition, and motivated by a set of political and aesthetic norms not usually held by communist artists and critics. I would suggest that this tradition is the one inherited by many fellow-travellers of the revolution, and that the same set of norms is manifest in Leon Trotsky's political theory of "permanent revolution." Although we would hesitate to identify all of Trotsky's correspondents definitively as the bearers of a sophisticated and consistently articulated Marxist aesthetic, we can pose the question. It is certain that Trotsky -- the man and his ideas -- is the common denominator in both the Surrealist and the Partisan Review "projects" of the mid to late thirties. David Caute, a notable scholar of the broader European left, argues that political artists in the West have, in fact, "inherited" a similar intellectual

tradition which a priori connects them, and in particular, when they are not at the centre of party politics.

David Caute makes a case for the special place assigned "Western fellow travellers" when compared with their "comrades" in the U.S.S.R. The Soviet fellow travellers were dispersed after 1932 when "socialist realism" became "official dogma" in that country. Caute goes on to say that "after Trotsky's fall, the fellow-travelling sheep had been mauled by the wolves of R.A.P.P.," the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers.¹ However "western sympathizers were a different matter." Caute explains:

They demanded and had to be accorded a greater indulgence; if not exactly "the right to alight," at least the privilege of keeping one leg dangling from the car. In point of fact the paputchik² concept was not immediately adopted in the West: not until the early 1930's did fellow-travelling become a common political notion in Europe and America, with appropriate national translations: compagnon de route, sympathisant or, more polite, progressiste in France; Sympathisierende auf den Weg, or less respectful, Mitläufer in Germany; compagno di viaggio or di strada in Italy.³

Western sympathizers, of course, included the Partisan Review coterie, André Breton's following in France, and others in Mexico. Caute's comments about "fellow-travellers" are useful when considering the current of thought which these groups -- Trotsky's correspondents -- represent.

David Caute develops an argument in order to prove the value of the fellow-traveller in world literature and art. He explains that the fellow-traveller is not "just" a half-communist -- like Rahv, or Farrell, or Breton -- a writer or artist who is somehow lacking in conviction. He says the fellow-traveller is a child of the eighteenth century enlightenment, and he has a consistent and well-reasoned set of political -- and aesthetic -- principles all his own. Caute, however, does not credit Trotsky with much influence over this child, but neither is he aware of the

correspondence of the thirties, or how it may have been used by the various milieux as an arena for fellow-travellers' debate. Though he understands that fellow-travellers modified the Soviet theories of art and literature, he does not know about the letters which, we may say, served as a stepping-stone in the transition from socialist realism and proletarian culture, to more liberal Marxist views of both revolution and art in the West. As we have seen, by the mid-thirties neither the editors of the revised Partisan Review, nor Breton's followers, had adopted the early Soviet prescription for proletarian values and themes. We also know that this feature of their thought coincided with their correspondence with Leon Trotsky, and with attempts to integrate Marxism with a view of art and literature that does not discriminate against avant-gardism, or what has come to be known as modernism.

The fellow-travellers in the West experimented with prose and poetic form. Though both groups wrote manifestoes, certainly Breton wrote the greatest number of them. Though both groups published poetry, the "surrealist poem" developed early and under the banner of the surrealist movement in general. Writers who contributed to Partisan Review used diverse styles or modes of expression which were incorporated into the "experimental" poem, but there was no special "Partisan Review poem." Though both groups wrote essays, Partisan Review's editors were more prolific in their writing of literary and philosophical-political essays. And the surrealists decidedly expressed themselves quite consistently in painting and sketches; a smaller number of New Yorkers painted. Though both Breton and PR held ideas in common, they had different views about what the modern artist should do with his art.

There is no doubt that the surrealists were more outlandish in their work, using as they did non-Marxist ideas and thinkers -- such as Freud -- as inspiration.

Both groups were committed to the idea of the liberation of the human spirit, the Americans to the liberation of American culture. Some writers, such as William Carlos Williams, decided early in 1936 that this notion was incompatible with Marxism as the Americans knew it: such ideas were, perhaps, "half-communist." Williams articulated his position in the April 1936 issue of Partisan Review. He maintained that the American tradition is already, a priori, too flexible for Marxism to tolerate. Concomitant with this notion is the one that the idea and spirit of "revolution" is not at all equal to the practice of Marxism. Inherent in the American tradition is the notion of "revolution" as freedom, spirit and idea. Thus, Partisan Review posed the question: What is Americanism? The subtitle was: "A Symposium on Marxism and the American Tradition." William Carlos Williams participated in the symposium (along with nine other prominent American writers and critics). He said:

My opinion is that our revolutionary literature is merely tolerated by most Americans, that it is definitely in conflict with our deep-seated ideals. I think the very premises of the revolutionary writers prevent an organic integration with the democratic principles upon which the American spirit is born.⁴

Interestingly enough, Ferdinand Alquié says something similar, though not entirely parallel, about the surrealists. He says "le principe de la démarche surréaliste n'est pas la raison hégélienne, ou le travail marxiste: c'est la liberté."⁵ And the Oxford Companion to American Literature describes Partisan Review this way: although partisan to Marxism, it had based its "fight for intellectual freedom on opposition to regimentation, whether in fascism, or Stalinism."⁶ The same could be said for the surrealists, who in La Conception immaculée and in La Révolution surréaliste called for the freedom of all incarcerated prisoners, and made sacrosanct hysteria and other forms of mental

disorder. Certainly "real Communists" and Party members, whether in the U.S.S.R. or elsewhere, would not feel comfortable with such ideas, which were not wholly Communist, or even political. This is what sets Trotsky's fellow-travellers, his correspondents and their milieux apart from orthodox Marxist aesthetes and critics. At least these people questioned the traditional communist views of art and culture, but does this make them the bearers of "a new Marxist aesthetic"?

David Caute continues to see the question in terms of Western Fellow travellers and their Russian counterpart. Caute reaffirms the differences between the Western fellow-travellers and the "Russian paputchiki." He explains how they are, in fact, the children of enlightenment thought:

Apart from a certain reticence in their commitment, they shared few qualities in common with the Russian paputchiki. Far from being anti-rationalist, anti-urban, anti-modern, anti-Western and in love with the peasantry, they were on the contrary true sons and daughters of the Enlightenment, of the doctrine of Progress.⁷

Later he says that the "fellow-travellers were not Communists: they were, to adapt Lenin's phrase, 'me-too Communists'." He refers to Trotsky's views here,⁸ although Trotsky might not have agreed with the distinction Caute makes between "genuine" and "non-genuine."

In 1938 the exiled Trotsky accurately explained what separated the fellow-travellers from genuine revolutionaries: "a whole generation of the 'left' intelligentsia has . . . turned its eyes eastwards and has tied . . . its fate not so much to the revolutionary working class as to a victorious revolution, which is not the same."⁸

Caute explains further what he means by Enlightenment thought in his chapter "A Postscript to the Enlightenment,"⁹ some of which applies to the ideas and exchanges we have discussed in Trotsky's cultural correspondence. Caute verifies the influence of philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, of sociologists Pareto and Michels, and, of psychologists Freud and

Jung.¹⁰ Enlightenment thought, though the forerunner of Marxism, is not compatible with the praxis of the party and the party member. And, in fact, were we to look only at Partisan Review during its "period of transition, 1935-37," we might agree with Alan Wald when he says that PR's "break with Stalinism implied more of a repudiation of Marxism than was immediately visible at that time."¹¹

In this context is it wrong to suggest that Trotsky's correspondents represented a "new Marxist aesthetic"? Perhaps not: if we can accept Duncan Hallas' assumption that "Trotsky's Marxism" is a legitimate branch of Marxist thought, while realizing, as is stated in the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, that "Trotsky did not carry the day."¹² Trotsky's "approach" was not, as the Encyclopedia explains, the common one:

The more common approach of the Marxist critic has been to take on both tasks, and to view a given work not only as a reflection of the class interests and aspirations of its author, but as a valuable or a hurtful contribution to the understanding of the true goals of society. In its crudely militant form, Marxism asks of the writer that he should use his art as a weapon, exposing the falsities of bourgeois culture, and becoming a propagandist for the destined society in which all men will be happy and free because they will have lost their economic chains; the writer who does not subserve these ends is unacceptable and even dangerous, since his art may encourage the formation of erroneous "group psychologies."¹³

If one assumes that "the common approach" is the only Marxist approach, the movements we are discussing here, and the influence which they had in world cultural developments in form and idea, do not figure in our knowledge of literary history. On the other hand, if we grant them the status of a new or at least different Marxist aesthetic, we lay ourselves open to being "uncommon" in our assessment, and, perhaps not "truly Marxist." If we examine Trotsky's essentially political theory of permanent revolution, and use it as a political metaphor for the artistic criteria we can glean from the correspondence and from his own works,

perhaps a legitimate but new Marxist aesthetic will seem tenable. Trotsky, at least, tried to broaden the Marxist concept of art and literature in order to accommodate various schools of the avant-garde.

One must also remember that for writers and critics to side with Trotsky and his ideas was, at this time, an act of great personal courage and, therefore, not something done lightly.

In the "period of transition" Partisan Review's editorial staff, and André Breton's followers in the surrealist movement, made changes in their policies and ideas which, if we investigate, correspond to the political philosophy Trotsky put forward in his theory of "permanent revolution."¹⁴ It was written in book form during Trotsky's exile period in Alma-Ata in 1928 as a defense against Joseph Stalin's contrary idea of "socialism in one country." It was, however, written "as an answer to an attack upon the theory of permanent revolution by the Soviet journalist Karl Radek," first presented in the long essay, Results and Prospects, in 1906.¹⁵

The political theory of permanent revolution is based on three major tenets, which we may also apply to cultural and aesthetic theory. They are as follows:

1. Revolution does not begin one day and end the next; it is a continuous process and the process cannot be artificially halted or transformed. Trotsky says "... for backward countries the road to democracy passed through the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus democracy is not a régime that remains self-sufficient for decades, but is only a direct prelude to the socialist revolution." He continues: "Each is bound to the other by an unbroken chain."¹⁶ Trotsky may as well have said the same about culture. As we have learned from the letters, the transition from "bourgeois culture" to "revolutionary culture" is a process that cannot be forced. Trotsky says that "a permanent state of revolutionary development" is

necessarily established between "the democratic revolution and the socialist reconstruction of society." As we recall, especially in the letters exchanged between Trotsky, James T. Farrell and Partisan Review, this tenet also applies to the world of art, literature and culture. There is no such thing as "proletarian literature," for example. "Revolutionary literature" was the favoured term, allowing, as it does, for experiment and artistic licence. For Trotsky, opposing the two is, in his words, imprecise. In an interview with Maurice Parijanine,¹⁷ also one of the correspondents, he says:

Opposer la culture prolétarienne à la culture bourgeoise est inexact ou incomplètement exact. Le régime bourgeoise et, par conséquent, la culture bourgeoise, ce sont développés dans le courant de nombreux siècles.¹⁸

Moreover, Trotsky describes the process of cultural change, and the regimes which push change forward:

Le régime prolétarien n'est qu'un régime passager et transitoire vers le socialisme. Tant que dure ce régime transitoire (dictature du prolétariat) le prolétariat ne peut créer une culture de classe achevée à quelque degré.¹⁹

He adds that the important task of the proletariat is to "prepare" itself for socialism, in reality a state of classlessness. The important task of committed artists is to prepare a state of free art, classless art.

Communist leaders such as Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin and Andrei Zhdanov would, on the other hand, be wary of the notion of artistic licence because it might foster "high-brow art" and "bourgeois decadence." In his "Draft Resolution on Proletarian Culture," written on 8 October 1920, Lenin makes his views clear. While opposing the idea that the Proletkult (proletarian culture) organizations become the official representatives of Soviet art, he says:

All educational work in the Soviet Republic of workers and peasants, in the field of political education in general and in the field of art in particular, should be imbued with the spirit of the class struggle being waged by the proletariat for the successful achievement of the aims of its dictatorship, i.e. the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the abolition of classes, and the elimination of all forms of exploitation of man by man.²⁰

In January, 1925, at the first All-Union Conference of Proletarian Writers, a resolution was passed which decidedly separated the Soviet "Fellow-Travellers" from the "true" Communist writers. The fellow travellers were defended by Trotsky and A. Voronsky, who insisted that the Fellow-Travellers were a legitimate force in literary developments in the Soviet Union. The resolution proclaimed that

literature in a class society, far from being neutral, actively serves a particular class... Therefore, all talk about peaceful co-operation and competition of various ideologies in literature was a reactionary dream... Hence the necessity of ideological "intransigence" and "intolerance." The resolution contained a violent attack on those who denied the possibility of a specific proletarian culture and literature, and especially on Trotsky and Voronsky as the most consistent opponents of proletarian literature.²¹

The Voronsky "Theses", appearing originally in March 1924, represented the most authoritative opposition to the party position. Voronsky maintained that "the hothouse atmosphere prevailing in proletarian literary organisations handicapped normal developments, and that the 'urgent' issue facing Soviet culture was not the 'Fellow-Travellers,' but the problem. . . of helping literature get closer to real life, of saving it from abstract romanticism and from Red hagiography."²² Voronsky's "Theses" did not, however, win influence, leaving the way open for the doctrine of "socialist realism" in 1932.

Max Hayward, in his article "The Decline of Socialist Realism,"²³ outlines the major features of the doctrine. Most important, he says, is that the author "display a certain historical optimism," that he lead "the reader to conclude that ultimately victory" is certain.²⁴ This thematic and formal requirement fulfills the

element of ideinost', or ideology. The second element basic to socialist realism is narodnost' a word which implies a commitment to both "the people" and the nation. The author becomes the spokesman of the people, and speaks in a language they are able to understand. The third element, partiinnost', is derived from Lenin's 1905 essay, Partiinaya organisatsiya i partiinaya literatura²⁵ (Hayward's transliteration), and is the feature which marks off socialist realism from any other kind of realism²⁶.

The Great Soviet Encyclopedia explains partiinnost' as "the fact that the artist openly sides with the progressive tendencies of historical development."²⁷ It is interesting to note that this same encyclopedia, even in its present edition, views "Avant-gardism" with suspicion, naming Picasso and Neruda as two representative artists who, in the 1930's "overcame the narrowness of the social positions espoused by avant-gardism."²⁸

2. During the revolution there will, of necessity, be constant internal struggle. Trotsky says "revolutions in economy, technique, science, the family, morals, and everyday life develop in complex reciprocal action and do not allow society to achieve equilibrium."²⁹ Consequently a revolution in arts and letters would also be in constant struggle, and, of necessity, could not support a state of "equilibrium" or, even, neutrality. Art must change; it is part of the superstructure and is, therefore, a reflection of the economic base, and its fluctuations. In this light the debates within Partisan Review and the surrealist movement in the late thirties are necessary and positive. Revolutions in "technique" are also necessary. As we have discussed earlier, as long as "new" forms are created and used by artists, culture itself will be strengthened, and freedom of the artist maintained. Trotsky may not have thought T.S. Eliot was a revolutionary man in the political sense, but certainly

Partisan Review accepted and published his work because Eliot experimented with poetic form in The Wasteland. This is a "revolutionary act", an act which challenges the status quo in verse. As Fredric Jameson has said in the afterword to Aesthetics and Politics "nowhere has a 'return of the repressed' been more dramatic than in the aesthetic conflict between "Realism" and "Modernism"."³⁰ Jameson, however, also thinks that the debate itself is "older than Marxism," and reflects the natural and continuous conflict between historicity and aesthetics. Among the surrealists, Partisan Review and the Mexican muralists, we see mirrors of the same debate: to realistically depict the working class, or the oppressed, or to modernistically explore all new forms and ideas. Modern Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton confirms this view when he says that

the thirties argument about realism and modernism raises a whole gamut of questions: theories of "reflection " and "commitment"; the place of cognition in art; "élitist" versus "popular" artefacts; questions of "totality", production and contradiction.³¹

The neo-Marxist critics were particularly involved in the debates around these questions. George Bizsray, in his book Marxist Models of Literary Realism, has relegated these critics to the role of problematic quasi-Marxist critics, or, "Socialist intellectuals."³² Among them are Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, the Frankfurt School of social philosophers (including Theodor Adorno) and, most pertinent to this study, the radical Anglo-American Critics of the 1930's.³³ Michael Löwy, in his book Pour une sociologie des intellectuels révolutionnaires: L'évolution politique de Lukacs, 1909-1929, describes an influence which he calls "la pensée dialectique révolutionnaire," representatives of which include the young Lukacs, Korsch, Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg, and Trotsky, and to whom we might add the modern neo-Marxist, Louis Althusser.³⁴ Löwy rightly says that these intellectuals were published, translated and discussed "de Paris à New York

et de Tokio à Buenos Aires."³⁵ They are distinguished by the conviction that--and here he quotes Lukács from Die Rolle der Moral in der Kommunistischen Produktion, 1919--

La mission historico-mondiale du prolétariat se manifeste précisément dans ceci que l'accomplissement de ses intérêts de classe apporte avec soi la rédemption social de l'humanité.³⁶

Lukács here believes in a freedom which comes, still, of the dictatorship of the proletariat; other socialist intellectuals put the stress on the practice of dialectical thought and action. Theodor Adorno, for example, berates Walter Benjamin for his "pre-censorship according to materialist categories."³⁷ Adorno makes a case for the autonomy of art when he writes to Benjamin on 18 March 1936 that "l'art pour l'art" is just as much in need of a defence as the "Kitsch film." Furthermore, he says that "the united front which exists against it and which to my knowledge extends from Brecht to the Youth Movement, would be encouragement enough to undertake a rescue."³⁸ This sentiment parallels that of the Surrealists and Partisan Review. We are reminded, in particular, of Clement Greenberg's essay, "The Late Thirties in New York," wherein he draws a connection between "anti-Stalinism," "Trotskyism" and a theory of "l'art pour l'art." He says

Radical politics was on many people's minds, but for these particular artists Social Realism was as dead as the American scene: (Though that is not all by far, that there was to politics in art in those years; some day it will have to be told how "anti-Stalinism," which started out more or less as "Trotskyism," turned into art for art's sake, and thereby cleared the way, heroically, for what was to come.)³⁹

It is interesting to note that Greenberg published an article on the "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" in Partisan Review in 1940 (July-August), and was a member of the anti-Stalinist League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism.⁴⁰ Greenberg and Adorno anticipate the "new Marxism" of the sixties and seventies, in which Marxists freely discuss "decadent" movements and art (including Kitsch, avant-

garde theatre and science fiction), and do not accept the premise that only Socialist Realism represents progressive art. In fact echoes of the thirties are heard in the works of the Marxists or, Neo-Marxists, who herald experimentation with form, and the idea of human liberation. For some, such as Lucien Goldmann, this has meant the marriage of structuralism and Marxism, as in The Human Sciences and Philosophy.⁴¹ Or, at the very least, it has meant the cautious revision of orthodox Marxist aesthetics. Goldmann opens his essay on "Genet's The Balcony: A Realist Play" with the following comment on Socialist Realism:

Today the notion of socialist realism has been severely undermined by the many years during which it meant the submission of the writer to a given political directive—a submission that could not but render his work abstract and take from it much of its value. This is why one can say that for a long time the important works of communist writers or of writers sympathetic to communism—and there are some that are first-rate, such as those of Aragon, Sholokov, Brecht, etc.—were valuable in spite of the ideology of socialist realism which their authors more or less professed and not because of it.⁴²

The concept of "realism" has been stretched by the new Marxists, in part by "critical theory", and in part by a more inter-disciplinary approach to the discussion of literature, culture and the history of ideas. Goldmann uses the non-Marxist discipline of structuralism to accomplish this task, whereas someone like Roger Garaudy, even though he falls into George Bisztray's esteemed category of "committed party critics", and is a representative of the "vanguard of Marxist literary theory,"⁴³ attempts a marriage between Marxism and Christianity in some of his work, and especially in L'Église, le communisme et les chrétiens.⁴⁴ Herbert Marcuse, much like the Surrealists, incorporates psychoanalysis and phenomenological notions of individual freedom into his work.⁴⁵ Paul Piccone, a proponent of the "New Marxism", surveys the critical theory which appends the "phenomenological qualification to Marxism," and his comments could as easily apply to the avant-gardists of the thirties. He says that his qualification,

far from being a mere philosophical afterthought, is the conceptual otherness of a determinate socio-historical problem: the need to develop a critical approach to social reality able both to apprehend as well as direct the historical process according to a genuinely humanistic project.⁴⁶

3. Permanent revolution has a quality which is international. Trotsky reasons that "a reconciliation of the uneven processes of economics and politics can be attained only on a world scale."⁴⁷ Connecting intelligentsias from different parts of the world would contribute to this reconciliation. As we know both André Breton and Partisan Review aim to make their journals and their circles international. Among them were immigrants: Jean Malacki, or Malaquais, was a Russian in Paris; Philip Rahv's family landed in New York from Eastern Europe. Borders were effectively crossed through the correspondence we have examined, sometimes through Trotsky and his secretaries, whose facility in a number of languages fostered "international" communications. As Partisan Review grew away from orthodox views of proletarian culture, it also publicized the new "revolutionary" works of authors in other countries, such as André Malraux, Ilya Ehrenbourg and Louis Aragon (October-November 1935); and Ignazio Silone (October 1936). Through it, we must remember, a very important international triangle of artists was set up. It stretched from Western Europe, south to Mexico (Diego Rivera and Frieda Kahlo) and north to New York (Partisan Review) and even Canada (Earle Birney).

The idea that art should be international in scope is completely antagonistic to Soviet Socialist views of art. Soviet chauvinism was, by 1934, entrenched in its cultural policy. In that year Zhdanov delivered the congressional speech to the First Soviet Writers' Congress in Moscow (this is four years after the RAPP congress in Kharkov, attended by Louis Aragon), revealing the ethnocentrism of his position. In light of the title of his speech, Trotsky's internationalism seems all the more dissident, and threatening. Zhdanov's title was: "Soviet Literature: the

Richest in Ideas, the Most Advanced Literature."⁴⁸ This formulation would seem preposterous to Trotsky and his followers among the Surrealists at the time. Partisan Review was slower to respond, although it had been publishing international literature and criticism since 1934.

Earle Birney, whose pseudonym was Earle Robertson, corresponded with Trotsky from 1935 to 1939, during which time he was "an active Trotskyist" in Toronto, and for a time, in London, England. In 1937, Birney wrote to Trotsky as a "Fourth Internationalist" and as "the literary editor of the Canadian Forum." He describes the Canadian Forum as "the only non-Stalinist left-wing monthly in Canada." He says it "models itself, with characteristic Canadian hermaphroditism, on both the English New Statesman & Nation and on the American Nation." That letter was written on 29 January 1937, and only four months later, Birney published an article in the Forum entitled "Proletarian Literature: Theory and Practice."⁴⁹ Birney's views seem to be influenced by Trotsky's ideas about art and culture: Birney does not describe "proletarian art" as working class art, but as "the art of the class-conscious and struggling men."⁵⁰ Trotsky, however, rejected the notion of "proletarian art" itself; Birney uses the term to describe what Trotsky would prefer to call "revolutionary art." Ideas and influences certainly filtered through their "relationship", even though they met only once (when Trotsky was detained in Norway), and were separated by countries and languages. Internationalism was, at the time, important to both of them. And the development of ideas within an international context was mandatory. In The Permanent Revolution, Trotsky describes the reciprocal relationship of internationalism and "combined and uneven development," the natural, not always orderly, development of historical and social change. He says:

One must not proceed from a 'preconceived harmony of social development. The law of uneven development still lives, despite the tender theoretical embraces of Stalin [Trotsky refers here to the "Stalinist-Bukharinist" idea that all countries are already ripe for revolution]. The force of this law operates not only in the relations of countries to each other, but also in the mutual relationships of the various processes within one and the same country. A reconciliation of the uneven processes of economics and politics can be attained only on a world scale.⁵¹

So, Trotsky maintains that "no country in the world can build socialism within its own national limits; the highly-developed productive forces which have grown beyond national boundaries resist this, just as do those forces which are insufficiently developed for nationalization."⁵² Invested with political commitment, we can see how the same can be true for cultural movements; we can see why the editors of Partisan Review and the followers of Breton tried to forge alliances with each other, and with other progressive artists and critics; we can also see why Trotsky devoted so much of his time corresponding with them and facilitating their alliances; and we can also conclude that such alliances broadened the scope of their art and, hence, allowed them to experiment with idea and form. And quite simply, as Irving Howe says in his recent autobiography, "passing through the Trotskyist movement . . . I began to hear about literary topics Socialists had seldom noticed," mostly the great modernist writers -- "Joyce and Proust, Mann and Yeats."⁵³ A permanent revolution in arts and letters separated Trotsky's correspondents and followers from other left-wing milieux and, accordingly, Trotsky had an influence on the intelligentsia of the thirties that we have only begun to assess.

Trotsky's direct influence on arts and letters is impossible to measure but we can say that he had, at the very least, a political influence on a group of men and women whose lives revolved around art and letters first, and politics second. In

1938, Breton inscribed the following on a flyer that was printed for Nicolas Calas' book of poetry, Foyers d'incendie: the period which came to an end with World War two is the "age of Lautreamont, of Freud and of Trotsky."⁵⁴ In 1943, F.W. Dupee, one of the editors of Partisan Review, wrote the following: "There's no question that Leon Trotsky definitely influenced me politically more than any American did..."⁵⁵ The prominent American novelist, James T. Farrell, took time to express his literary views to Trotsky directly, disparaging the common tradition of proletarian writing in America.

In an interesting letter dated February 8, 1937 (936), Farrell tells Trotsky that he appreciates his "literary criticism," and he comments on the state of American letters and ideology. The most relevant paragraphs I quote here:

I have found your writings on literature to be extremely interesting and valuable, and have just reread your book, "Literature and Revolution." I hope, if I can procure the time in the coming months, to write an article on it. What I believe is most important for Americans in this book is the unrelenting effort you make to establish a materialistic basis for literary criticism. This comes out in your specific analyses of writers, perhaps most notably in Andrey Biely. I have read extracts of his writings in translation, and I felt that you did more than justice to him, to his shallow and shabby mysticism. Literature is, perhaps, next to theology, the last resort for discredited concepts, and discredited concepts are always being smuggled into literature, and into literary criticism. American literary criticism is, in my opinion, particularly weak, full of shabby ideas, loose, sloppy, in many instances utterly worthless. There are a few exceptions to this rule, and undoubtedly the most notable exception to this rule is Edmund Wilson, whose work you may or may not have read. I think that he is a man of great talents, and also, he is a man of inexpugnable integrity. The left wing in American writing has been sadly messed up by the same types of attitudes as those which you criticized with justice in "Literature and Revolution." There was a great deal of talk, and writing, and a great display of energy, but it collapsed in the last year to a year and a half. Despite the blurbing which left wing writing received, it made less of an impression on the public than its defenders believe it to have made. New policies have washed aside the talk that flourished concerning proletarian literature etc. Now, there is room in the official left wing for nearly all writers. They just have to be well behaved, that is all. There is only one hopeful potentiality in this new policy. By and large, American writers are non-ideational, even many of the good and the talented ones such as William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway. In the

period when proletarian literature, so-called, was a fetish, non-ideational writers strove to inculcate a formal point of view (which they called Marxist) and they got all messed up. Now there is little concern with ideology, and at least this result is possible. Newer writers coming within the purview of such influences will not bother to think when they do not know how to think. They are more likely to follow their natural bent. What potentialities they have are more likely to be developed.

Trotsky's presence in the worlds of Dupee, Breton and Farrell is a fact. His real influence on art and letters probably filtered through his politics, even through theories like that of the permanent revolution. Knowledgeable scholars certainly differ in their assessments of his influence. Baruch Knei-Paz, in his book length study of Trotsky's thought, is overly cautious in his commentary. He says:

It is true that Trotsky's writings on art, literature and philosophy cannot be taken to constitute any major contribution to these fields, so that their importance in this respect should not be exaggerated.⁵⁶

And yet, Irving Howe, one of Partisan Review's contributors, attests to the influence when he says "We devoured the concluding chapters of Trotsky's Literature and Revolution, where he polemicizes against the notion of distinctly 'proletarian culture' and ends with a lyrical rhapsody celebrating the heights that 'socialist man' would scale, beyond even Goethe, Beethoven, and Marx."⁵⁷ Howe goes further; he says:

The movement tilted toward highbrow culture. Trotsky set an example through his own skillful literary criticism and his friendship with André Breton and Diego Rivera [he does not mention Trotsky's friendship with Rahv or Macdonald]. The first American follower of Trotsky had been the talented writer Max Eastman, and the main spokesmen in America were Shachtman and Burnham, both intellectuals. Furthermore, our fondness for nuance and casuistry predisposed at least some of us to the problematic modes of modernist literature. Trotskyism was marked by an abundance of intellectual pride: truth to the testing, faithfulness to the servities of Marxism. We came to feel superior because we were reading Joyce and Proust, and we made it a point of honor not to smother them in vulgar sociology.⁵⁸

Even if Knei-Paz is right about Trotsky's writings not constituting "any major contribution," Irving Howe's comments attest to the fact that they did constitute an influence. Knei-Paz is at a disadvantage as an assessor of the influence if only because the correspondence exchanged between Trotsky and those on whom he had any influence were not accessible to him. Knei-Paz' book was written before the Restricted Section of Trotsky's archives was opened to the public, and we must take this fact into account. Furthermore, Knei-Paz does not refer to all the published or unpublished correspondence that we have included in this discussion, but he does say, however, that Trotsky did have

a natural sensibility for the artistic. His political predispositions, whether personal or such as devolved from Marxism, were never so crude as to turn art and literature, or scientific knowledge, into sub-departments of politics.⁵⁹

Like the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetics, Knei-Paz does grant Trotsky a certain acumen in the field of literary criticism, and sets him apart from the more "dogmatic" Marxist critics. As Howe has said, Trotsky's followers brimmed with intellectual pride, and in part, this was the pride of not succumbing to dogmatism.⁶⁰

Knei-Paz is also willing to describe Trotsky as one of the few great politicians who can write and talk about the arts intelligently.⁶¹ He uses a few examples of Trotsky's work to illustrate his point; notably, Trotsky's 1939 review of Jean Malaquais' novel, Les Javanais,⁶² a review which was first published in the Fourth International in January, 1941. Though Trotsky's views of the novel were not taken very seriously at the time, the novel won the "Substitute Prix Goncourt" in 1963.⁶³ Trotsky's interest in Malaquais is also expressed in a brief exchange between the two men in 1937 (2898) and in 1939 (2897).

It is clear from this exchange that Malaquais was part of Trotsky's wider circle. Mention is made in the letter of both Diego Rivera and the French writer, André Gide, to whom Les Javanais is dedicated. By 1939 Trotsky was suspicious of Gide and his politics. A number of attempts had been made to get Gide to visit Trotsky in Mexico and Breton had tried unsuccessfully to involve him in the anti-Stalinist cultural movement. Gide could not tolerate the dogmatism of any of the Communists. When Trotsky was assassinated in 1940, Maria Van Rysselberghe recorded in Les Cahiers de la petite dame that Gide said: "Le sort lui devait bien une pareille fin."⁶⁴ Gide aside, Trotsky praised the high moral quality of the novel. Malaquais, he says, is a true lover of life: that he marries his love of life with the "very lowest social stratum" is what makes the novel important. He says:

The author is young and passionately fond of life. But he already knows how to maintain the indispensable artistic distance between himself and life... To love life with the superficial affections of the dilettantes -- and there are dilettantes of life as well as of art -- is no great merit. To love life with open eyes, with unabating criticism, without illusions, without embellishments, such as it is, whatever it may offer, and even more, for what it can come to be -- that is a feat of a kind. To invest this love of life with artistic expression, especially when this is concerned with the very lowest social stratum -- that is a great artistic achievement.⁶⁵

That the artist's love of life, without embellishment, should be an indicator of "great artistic achievement" is not a notion common among Marxist critics. Trotsky does qualify his judgment by admitting the particular significance of Malaquais' treatment of "the very lowest social stratum," but even this seems of secondary importance. We find him making similar judgments of the sincerity, the integrity of the modern artist in other commentaries. He, for example, forgives the Russian writer, Maxim Gorky, his "too inclusive friendship with the [Soviet] bureaucracy" because "he did not always teach the right thing but he did it with sincere insistence and open generosity."⁶⁶ This he wrote on the eve of Gorky's

death in 1936 (when ironically Trotsky was actually accused of "poisoning the aged Gorky").⁶⁷ We might agree with Alan Wald when he says that Trotsky affirmed that "modern literature. . . is essentially a dispute with the modern world,"⁶⁸ and to the degree that it is an honest dispute, it is great art. When that art is placed within an international context, and when the writers see themselves as contributing to a new world vision of society which is characterized by its longing for freedom, its belief in the potential of revolutionary change, and faith in the ability of human beings to achieve that change through politics and through art, then the writers in Trotsky's circle may be seen as contributing to a "new Marxist aesthetic" which operated in the mode of modernism.

One of Partisan Review's contributors, Harold Rosenberg, is well-known for referring to the avant-garde rebellion as "the tradition of the new,"⁶⁹ and William Barrett called it "the restless quest for novelty."⁷⁰ Barrett ironically compares the phrase "the tradition of the new" to the "Trotskyite phrase" "the permanent revolution," and he is not favourable in his assessment, claiming that the deeper meanings of older traditions are lost:

If the revolution is permanent and unceasing, then next week you reverse what you have revolutionized this week. A tradition is supposed to be a revered standard to which you hold fast; but if your tradition is novelty as such, then out of the impulse of sheer change you may abolish that tradition too.⁷¹

This comment is interesting when one reads Knei-Paz' interpretation of Trotsky's thought, which considers the impulse and the action of change as the important component in all new tradition-making. He says that

For Trotsky, . . . "progress" in art was obviously analogous to the development of social thought, and social and political movements. This being so, it seemed natural to him that art should become aligned with that social movement -- in the twentieth century, socialism -- which represented the complete rebellion against 'conventional' reality, and which promised to enlarge the scope of human freedom. [emphasis mine].⁷²

Perhaps there is a fine line between novelty and tradition-making, or newness. There would appear to be another factor by which the committed artist is judged. And here we refer back to Trotsky's letter to André Breton in late 1938, and to the previous discussion about Malraux and Gorky. The artist, and the critic, are judged by their integrity, their honesty, by the quality of their "artistic truth." Trotsky says

The struggle for revolutionary ideas in art must begin . . . with the struggle for artistic truth . . ., in terms of the immutable faith of the artist in his own inner self.⁷³

No self-contained, politically correct Marxist aesthetic is emerging, but the germs are there. Knei-Paz cautions us not to berate Trotsky because he did not write "pure literary criticism." Knei-Paz insists ~~that~~ Trotsky could "appreciate literature on its own terms but he wrote about it as a social critic and, as such, he was primarily interested in literature for the light it threw on social phenomena -- as well as for the reflection on such phenomena within it."⁷⁴ Knei-Paz believes that Trotsky did not "pretend to do much more than probe these dimensions of literature."⁷⁵ What we have to realize, however, is that he used a set of literary values that included variables such as newness and integrity, and that he circulated these values among disparate writers and artists all over the world, facilitating their communications; and by virtue of his interest, Trotsky legitimized their experiments with art and letters, even though some Marxists would disapprove. The combination is powerful, and certainly the Surrealists continued their work; Partisan Review publishes cultural criticism and avant-garde poetry to this day, and Rivera's murals and Kahlo's paintings decorate Mexico City and have, in a way, launched a school of Mexican mural painting. How Marxist any of these movements remained is another question, but without their break from Soviet communism in the 30s, and their passionate commitment to liberating art, no new

political avant-garde movements would have been born. As Christopher Lasch has said of Partisan Review's editor, Philip Rahv, we can say of the avant-garde movements in the thirties in general:

Rahv's commitment to modernism...grew out of his unexamined commitment to Leninism. Both rested on the assumption that literary and political vanguards alone can lead the masses to the promised land.⁷⁶

Notes

¹The Fellow-Travellers: A Postscript to the Enlightenment (New York: MacMillan, 1973), p. 2.

²Caute explains that Trotsky used the Russian word, paputchiki, to describe "fellow-travellers" in his Literature and Revolution. Paputchiki are "the hesitant, doubt-ridden supporters of Marxian communism," and the term, in this sense, could well apply to Partisan Review and its editors, to André Breton and his friends, and to Diego Rivera and other Mexican muralists who called themselves activists in the communist movement.

³Caute, p. 2.

⁴p. 14.

⁵Philosophie du surréalisme (Paris: Flammarion, 1955), p. 115.

⁶James D. Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), Fourth ed., p. 636.

⁷Caute, p. 3.

⁸He actually quotes Trotsky from Isaac Deutscher, Trotsky: The Prophet Outcast, 1929-1940 (New York: Vintage, 1963), p. 434

⁹pp. 250-66.

¹⁰p. 250.

¹¹"Revolutionary Intellectuals: Partisan Review in the 1930's" in Literature at the Barricades: The American Writer in the 1930's, ed. Ralph F. Bogardus and Fred Hobson (University of Alabama Press, 1982), p. 202.

¹²Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, ed. Alex Preminger (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), p. 169.

¹³ibid.

¹⁴The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects (New York: Pathfinder, 1972).

¹⁵Peter Camejo, "Introduction" to The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects, pp. 7-8.

¹⁶From "Introduction to the First (Russian) edition (Published in Berlin, 1929), in The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects, p. 132.

¹⁷In a letter from Jean van Heijenoort to me, van Heijenoort writes that Parijanine ("the Parisian") went to Russia before 1917 as a "précepteur", a family

tutor, and that his real name was Maurice Donzel. The letter is dated 22 April 1980.

¹⁸"L'Opinion de Léon Trotsky sur la littérature 'prolétarienne,'" Les Humbles (Juillet-Aôut, 1932), p. 7.

¹⁹Ibid. Yevgeny Zamiatin, author of the novel, We, which Soviet publishers refused to publish (it was written in 1920), has been credited with espousing a "philosophy" of "permanent revolution." See, for example, D.J. Richards, Zamiatin: A Soviet Heretic (New York: Hillary House, 1962), p. 61. This philosophy is similar to Trotsky's theory, but it is not identical. It is best expressed in Zamiatin's 1923 essay, "On Literature, Revolution, Entropy, and Other Matters," published in A Soviet Heretic: Essays by Yevgeny Zamiatin, ed. and trans. by Mirra Ginsburg (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 107-112. Zamiatin says: "Revolution is everywhere, in everything. It is infinite. There is no final revolution, no final number" (p. 107). This is a poetic version of Trotsky's theory.

²⁰V.I. Lenin, Selected Works, translated from the Russian (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), pp.621-22.

²¹Gleb Struve, Russian Literature under Lenin and Stalin: 1917-1953 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), p.78. See also Soviet Writers' Congress 1934, a facsimile reprint of the 1935 edition (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977).

²²Struve, p.81

²³Survey: A Journal of East and West 18 (Winter 1972):73-97.

²⁴p.78

²⁵p.74

²⁶pp.74-5

²⁷A translation of the Third Edition, vol. 24, s.v."Socialist Realism" (New York: Macmillan, 1980), p.245

²⁸Vol.1, s.v. "Avant-gardism," p.519

²⁹From "Introduction to the First (Russian) edition (Published in Berlin, 1929), in The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects, p. 132.

³⁰Trans. Ronald Taylor (London: New Left Books, 1977), p.

³¹"Aesthetics and Politics", New Left Review 107(January/February 1978):24-5.

³²(New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p.7 and p.197.

³³p.197

³⁴(Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1976), p.279. In the field of psychology, Paul A. Robinson refers to the parallel phenomenon of "Freudian radicalism," proponents of which are Wilhelm Reich, Géza Róheim and Herbert Marcuse. See The Freudian Left (New York: Harper, 1969).

³⁵ibid.

³⁶p.281

³⁷from "Correspondence with Benjamin," New Left Review 81(1973):72.

³⁸p.65 For more details of Adorno's cultural criticism, see his Prisms: Cultural Criticism and Society (London: Spearman, 1967). The ideas to which Adorno is responding here are contained in Walter Benjamin's book of essays, Illuminations, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969). For comments on the Frankfurt School and on the Institute of Social Research--to which Benjamin was affiliated--see Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973).

³⁹See Art and Culture: Critical Essay (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), pp.230-5.

⁴⁰See Appendix B for details about Greenberg.

⁴¹(London: Cape, 1969). Translated by Hayden White and Robert Anchor. See also his essay "Structure: Human Reality and Methodological Concept" in Structuralist Controversy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1970), pp. 98-110. For his Social Theory see La Création culturelle dans la société moderne (Paris: Denoel-Gonthier, 1971).

⁴²Translated by Robert Sayre, Praxis 4(1978):123.

⁴³Marxist Models of Literary Realism, p.197.

⁴⁴(Paris: Éditions sociales, 1949).

⁴⁵Marcuse's most representative work is Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1956). For a sense of his deviation from orthodox Marxism, see his essay, "A Contribution to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism," Telos 4 (Fall 1969): 2-8.

⁴⁶"Phenomenological Marxism," Toward a New Marxism, edited by Bart Grahl and Paul Piccone (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1973), p.135.

⁴⁷The Permanent Revolution, p. 255.

⁴⁸Marxist Models of Literary Realism, p. 125.

⁴⁹Bruce Nesbitt, "The Political Prose of Earle Birney: Trotsky and the 1930's," Essays on Canadian Writing: Earle Birney Issue (Spring 1981), p. 175. See also Marlene Kadar and Greg Teal, "Trotsky at Harvard," The Canadian Forum (August 1980), pp. 14-16. The letter from which I quote is numbered (4278) in the Trotsky Archives.

⁵⁰The Canadian Forum (May 1937), p. 60.

⁵¹p. 255.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Irving Howe, A Margin of Hope: An Intellectual Autobiography (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), p. 57.

⁵⁴Quoted in Maurice Nadeau, The History of Surrealism, intro. Roger Shattuck, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 121.

⁵⁵Alan Wald, "Revolutionary Intellectuals," p. 202.

⁵⁶Baruch Knei-Paz, The Social and Political Thought of Leon Trotsky (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 446.

⁵⁷A Margin of Hope, p. 57.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Baruch Knei-Paz, p. 446.

⁶⁰A Margin of Hope, p. 57.

⁶¹pp. 474-5.

⁶²(Park: Denoël, 1939).

⁶³The Substitute prize is called the Théophraste Renaudot Prize. See Jane Clapp, International Dictionary of Literary Awards (N.Y.: Scarecrow Press, 1963), pp. 274-5. Paul N. Siegel wrongly claims that Malaquais won the Goncourt Prize in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art, p. 225.

⁶⁴See Trotsky's letter (9356) to Pierre Naville in Appendix A, dated 28 January 1938, which indicates suspicions about Gide. Les Cahiers de la petite dame is part of Cahiers André Gide, volume 6 (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), p. 188.

⁶⁵Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art, pp. 226-7.

⁶⁶p. 219.

⁶⁷Trotsky's evaluation of Gorky was printed in Bulletin of the Opposition (July-August 1936), and is reprinted in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art, p.219.

⁶⁸"Revolutionary Intellectuals," p.201.

⁶⁹See Malcolm Bradbury, A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms, ed. Roger Fowler (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 117, and William Barrett, The Truants, (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press), pp. 156-7.

⁷⁰The Truants, p. 156.

⁷¹pp. 156-7.

⁷²Baruch Knei-Paz, p. 454.

⁷³Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art, ed. Paul N. Siegel (New York: Pathfinder, 1970), p. 124. The original letter is in the open section of Trotsky's Archives (bMS Russ 13, T4492) and is hand-written in Russian.

⁷⁴Baruch Knei-Paz, p.455.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁶"Modernism, Politics, and Philip Rahv, " Partisan Review 2(1980):188.

APPENDIX A

The documents reproduced here represent a sample of the papers included in Leon Trotsky's Archives at Houghton Library, Harvard University. The papers have been divided into four major sections:

T1	The Papers of Lev Trotskii (bMS Russian 13)
D	Dewey Commission Exhibits (bound with T1)
V	Jean van Heijenoort Papers (bound with T1)
T2	The Exile Papers of Lev Trotskii (bMS Russian 13.1)

The letters and documents reproduced here are, in the main, from the T2 Papers (bMS Russian 13.1). They appear in order according to the catalogue number printed -- sometimes faintly -- in the bottom left-hand corner of the document. The originals have been reproduced here in order that other details may be observed, including dates, corrections, annotations and style. The papers collected herein run from (bMS Russian 13.1) 369 to 15892, and have been referred to in the body of the dissertation by the corresponding number. A chronological list of the documents is provided on the next two pages.

The documents included here represent just a sampling of the material in the Archives. Trotsky's letters have been checked against a list of his published writings prepared by Pathfinder Press in New York and entitled "A Chronological List of Leon Trotsky's Published Writings, 1929-40." Appendix A does not include all of the letters and documents referred to in the body of the dissertation. It is intended to give the reader a sense of the original documents, and evidence of the links established through letter-writing from 1935 to 1939.

A Chronological List of the Documents in Appendix A

	Page
<u>1935</u>	
(4235) Wilhelm Reich to Trotsky; 10 September 1935; 1 page; unpublished	216
(9880) Trotsky to Wilhelm Reich; 18 September 1935; 1 page; unpublished	236
<u>1937</u>	
(4303) James Rorty to Trotsky; 17 March 1937; 2 pages; unpublished	217-8
(14582) Waldo Frank to John Dewey; 24 March 1937; 1 page; unpublished	245
(2836) Dwight Macdonald to Trotsky; 7 July 1937; 1 page; unpublished (with markings by Trotsky)	200
(2838) Dwight Macdonald to Trotsky; 23 August 1937; 2 pages; unpublished	201-2
(8951) Trotsky to Dwight Macdonald; 15 July 1937; 1 page; unpublished	222
(8952) Trotsky to Dwight Macdonald; 11 September 1937; 1 page; unpublished	223
(10588) Trotsky to Carlo Tresca; 6 October 1937; 1 page; published in <u>The Spanish Revolution (1931-39)</u> by Trotsky	237
(15892) "Art and Revolution" by André Breton; c. 1937; 3 pages; unpublished version of the Manifesto of F.I.A.R.I.	246-8
<u>1938</u>	
(3714) The Editors of <u>Partisan Review</u> ; 14 January 1938; 2 pages; unpublished (with markings by Trotsky)	210-11
(9356a) Trotsky to Pierre Naville; 28 January 1938; 1 page; unpublished	226
(4211) Philip Rahv to Trotsky; 1 March 1938; 4 pages; unpublished (with markings by Trotsky)	212-15
(9765) Trotsky to Philip Rahv; 21 March 1938; 4 pages; unpublished	228-31
(9767) Trotsky to Philip Rahv; 12 May 1938; 1 page; unpublished	232
(9768) Trotsky to Philip Rahv; 2 June 1938; 1 page; unpublished	233
(9769) Trotsky to Philip Rahv; 21 June 1938; 1 page; unpublished	234
(12195) Sara Lewis (one of Trotsky's secretaries) to <u>Partisan Review</u> ; 21 June 1938; 1 page; unpublished	239
(13806) André Breton and Diego Rivera to <u>Partisan Review</u> ; 27 July 1938; 1 page; unpublished	240
(9770) Trotsky to Philip Rahv; 30 July 1938; 1 page; unpublished	235
(369) André Breton (with a note from Jacqueline Breton) to Trotsky; 9 August 1938; 4 pages; unpublished (?)	194-7

- (7428) Trotsky to André Breton; 31 August 1938; 1 page; unpublished 221
- (13807) Le Groupe Surréaliste, Paris, to "Nos Amis de Londres";
21 October 1938; 4 pages; unpublished (?) 241-4
- (372) Jacqueline Breton to Trotsky; 4 November 1938; 2 pages;
unpublished 198-9
- (9463) Trotsky to Editorial Board (Partisan Review); 6 December 1938;
1 page; unpublished 227
- (6977) Benjamin Péret to van Heijenoort; 28 December 1938;
1 page; unpublished 219
- (6978) Benjamin Péret to van Heijenoort; n.d.; 1 page; unpublished 220

1939

- (2847) Dwight Macdonald to Trotsky; n.d. (c.1939); 1 page; unpublished 203
- (10589) Trotsky to Carlo Tresca; 10 April 1939; 1 page; unpublished 238
- (289) Florence Becker to Trotsky; 2-4 June 1939; 6 pages; unpublished 188-93
- (8987) Trotsky to Malaquais; 19 June 1939; 2 pages (including Trotsky's
original Russian draft); unpublished 224-5
- (2897) Jean Malaquais to Trotsky; 19 July 1939; 2 pages; unpublished 204-5
- (2898) Jean Malaquais to Trotsky; 21 August 1939; 4 pages; unpublished 206-9

APPENDIX A

Pages 188 to 248 of Appendix A have been removed due to difficulty in producing clear copies of documents therein.

APPENDIX B

The league for Cultural Freedom and Socialism had 34 signatories in 1939, most of whom were either literary or political critics, or artists (poets, novelists, painters), and very few of whom were political organizers. They are identified here, and their names are underscored in the first mention. Though many of the signatories have achieved notoriety in the world of arts and letters, some have not. It is important to provide the full context in which the League made its name, and the camp to which both known and lesser known signatories belonged. Hence biographical data is provided for all League members, despite their past or present reputations.

-- Lionel Abel is an intellectual and literary commentator who was closest to such writers and thinkers as Max Eastman, John Dos Passos and Lionel Trilling. He contributed to magazines such as Commentary and Partisan Review. According to Alan Wald, Abel's wife had worked as an assistant to political organizer and writer, James P. Cannon.¹ This would bring him into contact with American "Trotskyism." He is in some measure responsible for introducing European writers -- most notably Ignazio Silone -- to Partisan Review's readership.

James Burnham, an Oxford graduate and a political writer, was an organizer for the American Trotskyist organization and the Socialist Worker's Party. He taught philosophy at New York University for a time, and co-edited the Symposium magazine with the "Trotskyist poet," Philip Wheelwright, in 1933. James Burkhart Gilbert comments that the post-1937 Partisan Review had a natural philosophical affinity to the earlier Symposium.

In the early 1930's Burnham, Dupee, Macdonald, Phillips, Harold Rosenberg, Sidney Hook, William Troy, and Paul Goodman all contributed to the Symposium; by 1937 three of this group were editors of the Partisan Review, Burnham and Hook were close political friends, and Troy, Rosenberg, and Goodman were frequent writers.²

It is interesting to note that only the last three were not members of the League. In 1931 Burnham co-authored Introduction to Philosophical Analysis with Wheelwright, and in 1948 he co-authored The Case for de Gaulle with André Malraux. Malraux's sympathies were not at this time with Trotsky, so Burnham's political ideas must have changed somewhat. Burnham's correspondence with Trotsky is extensive.

Victor Francis Calverton, Marxist critic, novelist and lecturer, was a founding editor of the review, The Modern Quarterly, now The Modern Monthly. Apparently, his real name is George Goetz, and occasionally he is mentioned in the Trotsky archives under both names. His books include American Literature at the Crossroads (1931), and The Liberation of American Literature (1931). Alfred Kazin, in On Native Grounds, considers the latter one of only "four systematic books" of Marxist criticism in the thirties.³ Calverton corresponded with Trotsky in the early thirties, and like his colleagues at Partisan Review, solicited Trotsky's reactions to the The Modern Quarterly, "the revolutionary implications of which ... will interest you," he says to Trotsky, 10 September 1932 (433). Calverton also took the liberty of sending Trotsky his "new book," The Liberation of American Literature, and later (6 October 1932) his pamphlet, "For Revolution" (434). On March 19, 1933, Calverton sent Trotsky a 17-page "letter" on criticism and the U.S.S.R.

As far as I am able to tell, Trotsky responded to Calverton's pamphlet and the accompanying letter which asked for points of agreement between the two political thinkers, with an "Open Letter" entitled "Perspectives of American Marxism." This "letter" is published in the Writings (1932), pp. 293-299, and is numbered T 3463 in the already "Open Section" of the Trotsky Archives. Calverton, however, was, by the end of 1937 not too popular with Trotsky. In a published letter (December 31,

1937), Trotsky condemns Calverton and Modern Monthly's ambiguous "program." He also says that "Diego Rivera warned me against Calverton as a very dubious fellow."⁴ There are at least 7 letters in the Closed Section of Trotsky's archives (433-440) signed by Calverton, and at least two from Trotsky to Calverton (7473-7474).

Eleanor Clark, a little known author in the thirties, is also known as Mrs. Robert Penn Warren. She attended Vassar College with the only other two prominent "academic" women among the friends of Partisan Review, Mary McCarthy and Nancy Macdonald (wife of Dwight Macdonald). Like most of the schooled left intelligentsia, she "eventually wrote fiction." Alan Wald likens her in this respect to Saul Bellow, McCarthy, Bernard Wolfe, Lionel Trilling, Edmund Wilson and Isaac Rosenfield.⁵ Unlike James T. Farrell, Wald's subject, these persons (including Clark) "did not choose the common people as their subject nor realism -- naturalism as their method." Clark attended the 1937 American Writers' Congress. She participated in "The Critics' Workshop" with Rahv, Macdonald, McCarthy and Phillips. She is author of the 1946 novel, The Bitter Box, and the more popular 1974 collection, Dr. Heart, a Novella, and Other Stories. In the latter is included a short story written during Partisan Review's rebirth in 1937: "Call Me Comrade." This story details the "friendship" that arises when one young woman gets to know an older communist woman in jail. Interestingly, a later novel, Gloria Mundi (1979), is dedicated to Dorothy Eisner and John MacDonald, both of them correspondents with Trotsky in the thirties. Eisner's portrait of Trotsky (1939?) was exhibited at Harvard's celebration of the opening of "The Closed Section" of the Archives. Clark is mentioned in a number of the letters in the Archives, including (578-580), (6243), and (14965).

David C(ornel) DeJong is a poet and novelist, much of whose work is about his homeland, Holland -- notably Old Haven, 1938, and With a Dutch Accent, 1944. His first poems were published in 1905 in a chapbook entitled Elks, Mooses, Lions and Other Escapes (Eureka, Calif.: Hearse chapbooks). The first poem in the collection is typical of his free style, and is neither naturalistic nor "proletarian." "Man in a Secret Cottage" is full of linguistic tricks. It reads:

MAN IN A SECRET COTTAGE

Speak to me of love,
the double-aimed and
tripple-lisped, see what
she wears underneath
to make her so durable
and yet such a saint.
I would scud with her
down lakes full of sun
naughtying, though cherries
in whiskey is what she
seems to be primed for
in solvent contradiction.

In this sort of cottage,
flimsy in roses, and sung
about in millionaire-voice
soliciting pennies from
heaven, it is a teaser-o
to be shy and temperamental.

Just simper to her silly-o,
and be ripe from knowing,
the-drawback ever being
an own feasible wife filled
with guilt-edge possision
and honorable sense of duty.

This merry tale could end
hanging tail up, eyes down,
and with little ole love
dangling into the wishing-well,
among the buckets of sorry-o
and the chills of regret.

Frederick Wilcox Dupee is an educator and literary critic who, during the thirties, sat on the editorial boards of three reputable, liberal (if not leftist)

magazines: Miscellany (1929-1932); New Masses (1936); and, Partisan Review (1937-1941). He has written a number of pieces on Henry James, e e cummings and Dickens.

James T. Farrell is the most prominent fiction writer in the League at the time. His correspondence with Trotsky has already been documented by Alan Wald, Edgar Branch, David Madden and others. Certainly the thirties represented his "revolutionary Socialist years," and some of his best work. In 1932 the first volume of the Studs Lonigan trilogy is published. In 1935 Farrell, at this time a believer in communism, addresses the first American Writers' Congress in New York City. In 1936 he publishes his controversial A Note on Literary Criticism, much of which is clearly influenced by Trotsky's Literature and Revolution. Kazin calls A Note ... "a rare essay in Marxist self-evaluation."⁶

There are at least 14 documents exchanged between Trotsky and Farrell and housed in the Closed Section of the Trotsky Archives (935-942, 7749-7753 and 15959). Trotsky's letter to Farrell, November 8, 1937, 7750, is published in the Writings (1936-37), pp. 47-8. When Trotsky was murdered in 1940, Farrell wrote an impassioned tribute to him in Partisan Review (vol. 7, No. 5). In one of Farrell's last interviews in 1975, Dennis Flynn and Jack Salzman questioned the older, more sober Farrell about his relationship to Trotsky. Farrell responded:

I admired Leon Trotsky tremendously. He affected my political thinking more than my literary thinking. I read many of his books. The first time I read Trotsky was in 1931 in Paris. I read Literature and Revolution. In 1933 I read My Life, and the first volume of The History of the Russian Revolution in '33-'34. Then I read other works of his. I still look at him as a great hero. He had an extraordinary mind. But, I mean, history has not turned out the way he expected it to be or the way anybody else expected it to be.⁷

All of Farrell's letters to Trotsky are very ordinary in a way, unassuming and affectionate. After the death of Trotsky's son, Leon Sedov, Farrell sent a

handwritten note, with a postscript by his actress wife, Hortense Alden. It is reproduced here (938):

Mar, 17, 1938
New York City.

My Dear Leon Trotsky:

Hortense and I have thought many times of you and Natalia in recent weeks. We did not write to you because we felt the utter inadequacy of anything that we might say in the face of what has happened. We were shocked and grieved. When we read what you had written of your son in The Challenge of Youth, we were deeply stirred and moved. I had hoped that someday I would have the opportunity to meet your son and get to know him as a friend. It is an opportunity of which I have been robbed. But what you have written of him makes me feel a little that I know what Sedov was like. Hortense and I send you and Natalia our warmest friendly greetings.

Farrell

P.S. I started a letter to you both twice but felt my words were to (sic) impotent. Love -Hortense.

A few months later Farrell, Alden and two friends sent this short note (939):

June 23/38

Dear L.D.

We are quite close to where you used to live in the war days and we have been thinking of you. We send greetings and affection.

Alfred Rosmer
Nathan Gould
James T. Farrell
Hortense Alden

Farrell obviously held Trotsky in high esteem.

It is interesting to note that another section of Harvard's Houghton Library, the "American" letters, contains a different set of correspondence between Farrell and other writers. A rather long correspondence between Farrell and Oswald Garrison Villard, an American journalist and contributor to The Nation, began in 1937 (AM 1323) and went at least as late as March 15, 1946 (AM 1323). Farrell also corresponded with the poet, Sherry Mangan, who is also a signatory of the League.

Clement Greenberg is a painter and an art critic, and at the time when he was close to the editors of Partisan Review, he worked on the periphery of New York's art circles. In Fall 1939, PR published his "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in 1940 (July-August) his "Towards a Newer Laocoon," and in 1952, his "Art Chronicle." He has said, however, that "for over two years (1941-43), while an editor of Partisan Review, I was almost entirely out of touch with art life."

In 1948 Greenberg published his book, Joan Miro. He is best known, however, for his Art and Culture; Critical Essays (1961), parts of which have been published separately in various New York magazines. In his essay, "The Late Thirties in New York," Greenberg explains how abstract art was the main issue among painters he knew in the late thirties. He does give weight, while denying the real influence of "social realism," to the importance of politics in that period. Today Clement Greenberg is considered an authority on non-representational art, and a proponent of the avant-garde.

William Gruen is a difficult person to trace now. According to a letter from William Philips, however, Gruen "was a professor of philosophy at New York University."

He taught partly in the extension division. I have no idea where he is now or whether he is alive.

(January 22, 1982)

Melvin (Jonah) Lasky was an editor and publisher in New York in the thirties. From 1942 to 1943 he was the literary editor for The New Leader. He edited one of the first books on the uprisings in Hungary in 1956: The Hungarian Revolution (1957). He is best known for the more recent collection of essays entitled Utopia and Revolution (1976).

James Laughlin IV, as far as I can tell, is the same "Jay Laughlin" referred to in a letter from John (Jack) Wheelwright to Sherry Mangan (AM 1816 (406)), June

21, 1939. This letter identifies him as having something to do with a new Directions Poetry Anthology (editor?). Wheelwright is proud to say he has joined the FIARI "section here in Boston." Laughlin is known as a publisher and a writer, and a collector of little magazines. His own publications include A Small Book of Poems (1948) and Selected Poems (1960).

Dwight Macdonald was an associate editor of PR from 1937 to 1943. Before that he had been a staff writer with Fortune magazine (1929-1936). He wrote much literary criticism, and published in reviews as varied as Politics and The New Yorker. He is known for his commentaries on mass culture, including his book, Against the American Grain (1962). His correspondence with Trotsky was extensive. Macdonald died in 1982, soon after he wrote a review of the film Reds in Partisan Review 49, pp. 442-5. Time magazine printed:

DIED. Dwight Macdonald, 76, contentious cultural watchdog who wryly tilted against both philistinism and pretension; in New York City. Educated at Exeter and Yale, Macdonald wrote for FORTUNE from 1929 to 1936. His intellectual life was an odyssey: he was a Trotskyite who opposed World War II and singlehandedly ran the pacifist-leftist journal Politics (1944-49). Next he declared himself a "conservative anarchist" and in his last major political stand supported the antiwar movement of the '60s. A fastidious critic, he graced Esquire and The New Yorker with sometimes highhanded pronouncements about movies, books and overblown fads. Observing in a 1960 essay that "the Lords of Kitsch sell culture to the masses," Macdonald famously defined and deflated the tastes of Masscult and Midcult in the U.S.

Little is known about John McDonald. In 1934 he broke with the Communist Party, and soon after joined the Trotskyist groups. He was a member of Farrell's "anti-Stalinist" baseball team in 1939. His name appears often in the correspondence, and he corresponded directly with Trotsky in 1937 (after having visited him in Coyoacan).

Charles Malamuth was a member of the original Trotsky Defence League (1936) along with Eleanor Clark, Felix Morrow and George Novack. He is best known for his translation of Trotsky's biography of Stalin, and in this regard he is mentioned in the correspondence.

Sherry Mangan, whose pseudonyms included "Terence Phelan" and "Patrice," was an American journalist, and a "Trotskyist writer" according to Wald (p. 76). He spent a good deal of time in Paris where he met André and Jacqueline Breton, and where he worked with some of Trotsky's close friends. He and Breton became trusted comrades, attested to by a mysterious letter from Breton to Mangan in 1939 (Ms AM 1816 (46)) arranging a meeting. The exchanges between Farrell and Mangan are affectionate though concerned for the most part with publishing business (AM 1816 (532)). They took place after Trotsky's death. Mangan, however, did correspond with Trotsky in 1939, (2905) and (2906). The letter, written on June 2, refers to a "préface-poétique" to modern gravures of bullfighting entitled Black Bull by a Hungarian named Peterdi. Mangan tells Trotsky that Black Bull will "amuse you in a moment of leisure." This correspondence attests to Mangan's involvement in both Trotskyist circles and cultural circles. His preface reads:

BLACK BULL

A bull, or a man, or a people, as you may see it. Less about, than after, Spain. For all are now haunted by that black bull, who fought with such courage, and such blindness, as a gold-smothered matador and his crew of less glamorous but alas effective lackeys, led him skilfully through his predictable dance of death. But not Spain alone: there are bulls in Peterdi's Hungary, too. Nor only a people: Peterdi is a man as well. Black Bull has fleshed his anger; he has wetted his horn. There were those who, as their entrails burst from them, learned in that last light-splitting flash to fear his strength. And there are those who may learn from Peterdi. Strength is not all. Black Bull followed a red cloak to his death. They were fancily paid, those adepts who waved it, by the safe bourgeois spectators lolling in the sombre. The red cloaked gold, its fringe showing too thinly to warn him. It was a very artistic performance, but he is dead.

Dead? But he is part of the vast vital cycle: He is trees and grain and the lush grass which nurtures his kind. He is forever renewed, in greater strength, again to follow his historic nature, to follow red. Red? Always. But another day he will follow another red--not the sleazy pinkish silk that cloaks the blood-spattered gold, that tawdry tinsel cloak wung in opportunist mariposas and valencianas to zigzag him to an exhausted doom; nor the time-dirtied blood-red muleta that hides the treacherous sword--but the fierce red of his final wrath, the clean red of revolution.

Black Bull does not pretend to be a detailed illustration of a tauromaquia, or of a history of war, or of an autobiography. But it unpretentiously succeeds in portraying the essence of all three: their beautiful violence and their needless tragedy.

Sherry Mangan

Paris
29 May
1939

Clark Mills made his name as an editor and translator. As recently as 1981 he translated Stéphane Mallarmé's Herodias (Prairie City, Illinois: James A. Decker), in part to provide a more creative text than that already published by Roger Fry. Much earlier, Mills co-edited The Green Linden: Selected Lithuanian Folksongs (N.Y.: Voyages Press, 1964).

George L.K. Morris was by profession a painter who financially supported the revived Partisan Review (1937). He was for a time the art critic for the magazine, and its fifth editor. Rahv estimates that he supplied about \$3000 a year for the magazine until 1943. Greenberg calls him "a leader of the American Abstract Artists." According to a 1938 letter from James Burnham to Trotsky, Morris "was a classmate at Yale of Macdonald and Dupee, and joined them 7 or 8 years ago in a short-lived magazine called Miscellany" (407).

Helen Neville, according to a letter from William Phillips dated January 22, 1982, "was a young writer at the time (the thirties) who published very little. The last I heard years ago was that she was living in Boston."

George (Edward) Novack is a political writer and organizer in the United States. In 1967 he became the editor of the International Socialist Review. He has published numerous books in Marxist political theory, including The Logic of Marxism (1942) and Polemics in Marxist Philosophy (1978). His correspondence with Trotsky or his designates is extensive, including at least 55 letters signed by him alone. He and James P. Cannon are responsible for securing the philosopher John Dewey to head the Commission for the investigation into the Moscow Trials. This information can be gleaned from Novack's letter to Trotsky on March 22, 1937 (3653).

About Lyman Paine I can find no information. According to a letter from William Phillips (January 22, 1982), Paine "escapes [his] memory."

Kenneth Patchen was, like Farrell, a young and struggling writer in the thirties. His first contribution to Partisan Review was in 1935, and a year later he published a book of poetry, Before the Brave. One of America's most experimental poets, Patchen published many books of poetry before his death in 1972. He is known for his unusual picture-poems, Poemscapes (1955), Wonderings and most recently, Hallelujah Anyway (1967). Patchen's association with left-wing intellectuals was most intense in the late thirties, however, when he corresponded with James T. Farrell (Wald, p. 151), and at least on one occasion, Trotsky (3717).

On January 24, 1938 Kenneth Patchen and his co-editor, Harvey Breit, wrote to Trotsky asking for editorial advice on behalf of their magazine, Pulse: A Magazine of Literature and Affairs. Pulse is probably the only west coast magazine mentioned in the correspondence; it came out of Los Angeles. As far as I know Trotsky did not reply to the very earnest letter. Because it refers to the same dilemma that Partisan Review's editors had in the magazine's formative and most political years, I reproduce it here in its entirety. The editors compare

themselves to schizophrenics: "as men and as editors we could be compared to the patient suffering a split personality." More precisely, they ask "what ... is the relationship between an organ (the roof-supporting timbers of which are truth and excellence of accomplishment) and the revolution?" The letter reads:

January 24, 1938

Dear Leon Trotsky:

We are two young men interested in literature and people; above all, in people. Writing, to us, in its highest sphere, has always meant the expression of man's desire to live well (that is to say, beautifully). It follows that the finest creators extend the horizon of human dignity and worth -- and it is to one of these that we now address ourselves. To you, then, not as specialist or scholar, but as a man whose persevering and all-embracing honesty has enriched humankind, we do now come with the inquiry regarding certain doubts with which we are deeply troubled.

It is our belief that we shall shortly be witness to a revitalization of magazine influence, an influence which has been subject to innumerable shipwrecks since the publication of Literature and Revolution; and, to use a faulty but definitive analogy, we wish rather to be the Lead-Goat than the sheep which follow him to their doom. In our present perplexity, one word from you will have the worth of volumes -- and a connection with greatness will have instilled in us a flowering confidence.

It would simplify things to state that as men and as editors we could be compared to the patient suffering a split personality; however, we know that we could not long endure in an editorial capacity did we not adhere to a policy of attempting to publish all that is valid in literature, all that is tenable in some respect; it is not too much to suppose that by advancing the cause of understanding, we contribute, in however small a part, to the cause of international revolution... knowing these things, can we be satisfied with this identity? Obviously, this leads nowhere. What, then, specifically, is the relationship between an organ (the roof-supporting timbers of which are truth and excellence of accomplishment) and the revolution? We are not, speaking frankly, a Marxist journal: thus the horns of our dilemma.

Permit us to particularize with this one question, the answer to which has apparently eluded contemporaries of ours. Is it consistent with our intention to preoccupy yourselves concerning our contributor's beliefs in the arena of politics and affairs, if such beliefs are not apparent in the work under consideration? In point, should we print inferior pieces by those whose opinion we share in preference to better ones by those with whom we disagree? Again, in the critical sphere and

that of polemics must our partisanism dictate an editorial judgement? At what point does the free expression of ideas become reaction.

Possibly we have been unfair to you in asking for what will of necessity be a Marxian evaluation of what is, in essence, a liberal journal. This does not detract from our eagerness as we await your reply.

Yours for the advancement
of revolution, we are,
sincerely yours,

Kenneth Patchen
Harvey Breit

Please address us: 2488 Cheremoya Avenue
Hollywood, California.

William Phillips has been on the editorial board of Partisan Review since 1934, when it was still an organ of the Communist Party. He has taught literature and literary criticism at a number of American universities, including New York University, The New School for Social Research, Rutgers, and, now, Boston University. From 1958 until 1968 he sat on the Board of Directors of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom. He has edited the following: Short Stories of Dostoevsky (1947), and Art and Psychoanalysis (1963). He has published a collection of stories and reviews entitled A Sense of the Present (c. 1967). He and Philip Rahv together edited The Partisan Review Anthology in 1962.

Fairfield Porter is best known as a painter, though he felt that his forte was art criticism. He wrote a number of art reviews and critical essays in the fifties and sixties for The Nation and ARTnews. Much of his work was collected after his death in 1975 in a book entitled Fairfield Porter: Art in its Own Terms: 1935-1975 (New York: Taplinger, 1979), edited and introduced by Rackstraw Downes. Downes explains that Porter made a brief visit to Moscow in 1927 where "he heard Trotsky being interviewed": this event "made a marked impression on [Porter's] political attitudes, especially during the Depression."⁹

Porter helped to develop one of the rebel little magazines, Arise which, like Partisan Review, served as an alternative to New Masses. Included in the above book is an essay (c. 1940) entitled "The Purpose of Socialism," in which Porter disagrees with both the orthodox Stalinist strategies, and Trotsky's strategies, for attaining socialism. Porter admires "the Barcelona commune of 1936," largely because he does not see the threat of new bureaucracies forming in more communal and egalitarian communities.

Porter's better known paintings include Trees in Bud and Morning From the Porch, neither of which is "political" in content, nor entirely abstract. Porter apparently wrote an article for Partisan Review in the early forties about the painter, Willem de Kooning, but the majority of the editorial staff rejected the article because de Kooning was too little known at the time.

James Rorty was one of the early "anti-Stalinist radical intellectuals," and friend to V.F. Calverton and James T. Farrell. He probably figured in Farrell's romans à clef, The Road Between (1949) and Yet Other Waters (1952) as "Lester Owens." We know that he was involved in the political and cultural debates around Partisan Review in the thirties, and he corresponded with Trotsky personally on March 17, 1937. He begins his letter by saying that he has often been tempted to "convey in a personal letter something of the admiration and gratitude which [Trotsky's] work has won" from him over the years. He continues:

There is no other living writer from whom I have gained so much in stimulus and in discipline; none who has taught me so consistently the lesson of impersonality, so liberating to the mind of a writer no less than of a revolutionary The decisions I have been forced to make to preserve my integrity as a writer have indeed brought me more than once close to the political current which you have represented and directed before the world. (4303)

In this letter Rorty also mentions his book, Where Life is Better (1936), "an ironical title given to a crude journalistic survey of America during the

depression." He says "it is probably bad Marxism, in spots at least, but the data is true..." Rorty's style and tone are best represented in the final paragraphs of the book wherein the fearful America which he describes has hope:

Wheel in a wheel. To travel over America is to see these wheels grinding faster and faster; to know that they cannot be reversed or stopped; to be shaken and terrified again and again by contemplating what their grist may be. Certainly in the days to come, there can be no escape, no peace, no neutrality for anybody.

Life can be made better in America. Indeed, America can be made quite magnificent. But not by those who dream dead dreams, who plead exemption from struggle on one ground or another, who cry for peace but will not pay its price....

How childish are all such pleas! Only when we have ceased to make them can we claim that as a people we have come of age and are worthy to challenge fate.¹⁰

It is interesting to note that one of Rorty's travel companions was Trotsky's translator, Charles Malamuth.

Rorty has been called an "anarchist poet" by critics. Among his books of verse are What Michael Said to the Census Taker and Children of the Sun, both of which were published before 1934. According to Alan Wald, Rorty attended that memorable 1937 American Writers' Congress along with the aforementioned Eleanor Clark, Philip Rahv, Mary McCarthy, William Phillips and the known "Trotskyist," Harry Roskolenko.¹¹

Harold Rosenberg was a writer and an art critic, and a regular contributor to Partisan Review and "many advance-guard periodicals" (PR, October 1936). He is said to have coined the phrase "action-painting" to describe the post-war painting of artists such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. Action-painting is a species of the general movement usually referred to as abstract expressionism. Rosenberg had something to do with debates which "often centred around the Trotsky question," and, according to James T. Farrell's diary, admired the French "Trotskyist" publication, Lutte Ouvrière.¹² Wald aptly calls him a "dissident

intellectual"; how close or far he was to Trotsky's American followers is difficult to say. Among his influential works are The Tradition of the New, The Anxious Object, Artworks and Packages, Act and Actor, The De-Definition of Art, Discovering the Present and Art on the Edge. An admirer of the Surrealists, the Constructivists and the New York artists, Rosenberg said of modern art in 1975 that it is "tentative and ephemeral" and "lives in the expectation of being displaced." This line is from a talk delivered in New York and published in Critical Inquiry 2 (Winter 1975): 217-32.

Paul Rosenfeld was the music editor for Dial magazine, one of the small New York magazines that grew up in the twenties. Dial, like Partisan Review, was most devoted to literary criticism, and to the arts in Europe. Rosenfeld wrote for other small magazines such as Nation, Variety Fair, New Republic and the precursor to Dial, Seven Arts.

Harry Roskelensko, author and activist is remembered for his intervention at the American Writers' Congress because he countered the pro-Soviet views of the more distinguished critic Albert Rhys Williams (The Writer in a Changing World).¹³ He is the author of When I was Last on Cherry Street (1965) and The Terrorized (1967), the latter of which includes many political and personal anecdotes from the thirties.

Meyer Schapiro is a renowned art critic and professor in New York. Trotsky himself considered Schapiro among his "friends" in 1938, as evidenced by a short note he sent him. This note was written on 14 June 1938 from Coyoacan, and is number (10020) in the Archives. Apparently Schapiro sent Trotsky some of Breton's books, to which Trotsky replied:

In my eyes it is a sign that you belong to the camp of friends, who as yet are not too numerous but who are, fortunately, increasing. I hope to return the books in a short time.

Soon after receiving this letter Schapiro's critique of Lewis Mumford's The Culture of Cities was published in Partisan Review (July 1938), and entitled "Looking Forward to Looking Backward." Schapiro has written a number of books about artists and their traditions. Among them are two books on Vincent Van Gogh (1950) and Paul Cézanne (1952), and Romanesque Art (1977) and Modern Art: 19th and 20th Centuries (1978).

Delmore Schwartz was a creative writer who published regularly in Partisan Review and other small magazines -- including The Marxist Quarterly, Poetry, New Directions and The Southern Review -- in the thirties. He published a book of verse and prose after winning Partisan Review's prize for the best short story in 1938. Schwartz's story was entitled "The Statues," and was published in the May, 1938 issue of Partisan Review.

Winfield Townley Scott (1910-1968) was, according to William Phillips' aforementioned letter to me, "a poet of some talent and he acquired some reputation." Scott is the author of at least nine volumes of poetry, and one volume of personal literary essays, Exiles and Fabrications (1961). He is also the editor of works by Oliver La Fargue, Robert Herrick and Emily Dickinson. It is interesting to note that a man of such taste is found in the League's circles in the thirties. Scott was apparently intimate with the work of Alan Wald's "Trotskyist poet," John Wheelwright, and with the poet-critic, Amy Lowell. According to Scot Donaldson's biography, W.T. Scott was involved in "campus politics" in the late twenties, though he was not sure if he was a "Communist" or an "anarchist."¹⁴

Parker Tyler is a notable poet, film critic, art critic and literary critic. He is probably best known for his distinguished film criticism, including his early Chaplin: Last of the Clowns (1947). His more recent film criticism includes The Three Faces of the Film (1960), Classics of the Foreign Film (1966) and A Pictorial History of Sex Films (1974).

John Brooks Wheelwright (1897-1940) was "a modernist poet, architectural historian, heterodox Anglican, and highly unconventional Boston Brahmin, who devoted the last eight years of his life to revolutionary socialism."¹⁵ Friend to John Dos Passos, Kenneth Patchen and Delmore Schwartz, Wheelwright believed in the progressive and experimental American tradition in poetry. Much of his poetry in the thirties echoes sentiments we have already encountered in, for example, the 1935 editorial of Partisan Review. In 1932 Wheelwright joined the Socialist Party of Massachusetts, and he became well-versed in the "socialist classics." Wald says that "the Bolshevik leaders" especially came "to symbolize the continuity in culture for him--the assimilation of past achievements into a program for the future."¹⁶ Thus, Trotsky himself became "the heir of Prometheus," the celebrant in his poem "Titanic Litany," dedicated to Leon Trotsky. It is full of enthusiasm, optimism and romantic epithets which remain unmatched by eulogists. For this reason the poem is quoted here in its entirety:

Prometheus!
 Prototypal Christ, pre-crucified
 pushing the invisible
 advance upon our pushed upon chaos.
 Discoverer and inventor, never let'em say:
 "Human nature cannot change."
 Institutor of fire's Sacrament
 and outward forms of conscious inner will;
 Prometheus!
 Forethought of freedom (freedom
 for her and him; concrete, in that and this)
 Titan, tortured by the tyrant vulture
 whom Vulcan riveted as firmly as machines
 can rivet laborers to capital
 Prometheus.
 O, let it never be said that the human of nature cannot
 change. Saul changed to Paul. All saints change
 man's nature, as men change nature's change.
 Show us in our own acts that we hear our supplication.
 Never a Saint is revered who was not reviled
 as a rebel. Every rebel, in so far prophet
 breeds holy doubt and skeptic faith in deeds'
 Melchizedekian Succession.

While boom the double guns of Act and Word,
 mutating fire swims through the protestant
 blood of Christ, erect above your shadowed rock
 Prometheus!
 Our supine Crucifixion.¹⁷

Bertram D. Wolfe -- not to be confused with political organizer, friend to Partisan Review, and correspondent of Trotsky, Bernard Wolfe -- was before 1937 an apologist for the Moscow Trials. He collaborated with Mexican muralist Diego Rivera on a book entitled Portrait of America (1934). He also wrote a biography of Rivera, The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera (1963), and Three Who Made A Revolution (1948), about Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. Trotsky considered his views important enough to write an article about him and his change of heart in late 1937. It is called "Bertram Wolfe on the Moscow Trials," and it chastises Wolfe and his "generation of Marxists" for being "completely unlearned in a Marxist approach to great problems."¹⁸

Notes

¹James T. Farrell, The Revolutionary Socialist Years, (N.Y.: New York Univ. Press, 1978), p. 68 and p. 158.

²Writers and Partisans, (N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons, 1968), p. 175.

³(N.Y.: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1942), p. 408.

⁴Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-38), (N.Y.: Pathfinder, 1970 and 1976), pp. 121-2.

⁵James T. Farrell, p. 9.

⁶Kazin, p. 408.

⁷"An Interview with James T. Farrell," Twentieth Century Literature, (February 1976), p. 5.

⁸Art and Culture: Critical Essay, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), pp. 230-5. For an interpretation of Greenberg's views, see T.J. Clark, "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," Critical Inquiry (September 1982), pp. 139-56. Clark uses the phrase "Eliotic Trotskyism" to describe Greenberg's theoretical stance (p. 143) because, he posits, it "finds its proper echoes in Eliot, Trotsky, F.R. Leavis, and Brecht" (p. 149).

⁹p. 26.

¹⁰Where Life is Better: An Unsentimental American Journey, (N.Y.: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1936), p. 383.

¹¹Wald, p. 73.

¹²p. 155.

¹³ed. Henry Hart (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1937), p. 228.

¹⁴Poet in America, (Austin and London: Univ. of Texas Press, 1972), p. 91.

¹⁵Alan M. Wald, "From Antinomianism to Revolutionary Marxism: John Wheelwright and the New England Rebel Tradition," Marxist Perspectives, 10 (Summer 1980), p. 44.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁷Collected Poems of John Wheelwright, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld, intro. by Austin Warren (N.Y.: New Directions, 1972), p. 119.

¹⁸Writings of Leon Trotsky (1937-1938), (New York: Pathfinder, 1970 and 1976), p. 59.

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